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CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Christopher Columbus.

Holly Edition

✠ Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus

By Washington Irving

And the Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus

Illustrated

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THE LIFE AND VOYAGES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Chapter III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE THROUGH THE GULF OF PARIA—RETURN TO HISPANIOLA.

[1498.]

THE quantity of fine pearls found among the natives of Paria was sufficient to arouse the sanguine anticipations of Columbus. It appeared to corroborate the theory of Ferrer, the learned jeweller, that, as he approached the equator, he would find the most rare and precious productions of nature. His active imagination, with its intuitive rapidity, seized upon every circumstance in unison with his wishes, and, combining them, drew thence the most brilliant inferences. He had read in Pliny that pearls are generated from drops of dew which fall into

the mouths of oysters; if so, what place could be more propitious to their growth and multiplication than the coast of Paria? The dew in those parts was heavy and abundant, and the oysters were so plentiful that they clustered about the roots and pendant branches of the mangrove trees, which grew within the margin of the tranquil sea. When a branch which had drooped for a time in the water was drawn forth it was found covered with oysters. Las Casas, noticing this sanguine conclusion of Columbus, observes that the shell-fish here spoken of are not the kind which produce pearls, for that those by a natural instinct, as if conscious of their precious charge, hide themselves in the deepest water.*

Still imagining the coast of Paria to be an island, and anxious to circumnavigate it and arrive at the place where these pearls were said by the Indians to abound, Columbus left The Gardens on the 10th of August and continued coasting westward within the gulf in search of an outlet to the north. He observed portions of Terra Firma appearing towards the bottom of the gulf, which he supposed to be islands, and called them Isabella and Tramontana, and fancied that the desired outlet to the sea must lie between them. As he advanced,

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, cap. 136.

however, he found the water continually growing shallower and fresher, until he did not dare to venture any farther with his ship, which, he observed, was of too great a size for expeditions of this kind, being of an hundred tons burden, and requiring three fathoms of water. He came to anchor, therefore, and sent a light caravel called the *Correo*, to ascertain whether there was an outlet to the ocean between the supposed islands. The caravel returned on the following day, reporting that at the western end of the gulf there was an opening of two leagues, which led into an inner and circular gulf, surrounded by four openings, apparently smaller gulfs, or rather mouths of rivers, from which flowed the great quantity of fresh water that sweetened the neighboring sea. In fact, from one of these mouths issued the great river the Cuparipari, or, as it is now called, the Paria. To this inner and circular gulf Columbus gave the name of the Gulf of Pearls, through a mistaken idea that they abounded in its waters, though none in fact are found there. He still imagined that the four openings of which the mariners spoke might be intervals between islands, though they affirmed that all the land he saw was connected.* As it was impossible to proceed

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 78.

farther westward with his ships he had no alternative but to retrace his course, and seek an exit to the north by the Boca del Dragon. He would gladly have continued for some time to explore this coast, for he considered himself in one of those opulent regions described as the most favored upon earth, and which increase in richness towards the equator. Imperious considerations however compelled him to shorten his voyage and hasten to San Domingo. The sea-stores of his ships were almost exhausted, and the various supplies for the colony, with which they were freighted, were in danger of spoiling. He was suffering also extremely in his health. Besides the gout, which had rendered him a cripple for the greater part of the voyage, he was afflicted by a complaint in his eyes caused by fatigue and over-watching, which almost deprived him of sight. Even the voyage along the coast of Cuba, he observes, in which he was three and thirty days almost without sleep, had not so injured his eyes and disordered his frame, or caused him so much painful suffering as the present.*

On the 11th of August therefore he set sail eastward for the Boca del Dragon, and was

* Letter of Columbus to the sovereigns, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 252.

borne along with great velocity by the currents, which however prevented him from landing again at his favorite spot, The Gardens. On Sunday, the 13th, he anchored near to the Boca, in a fine harbor, to which he gave the name of Puerto de Gatos, from a species of monkey called *gato paulo*, with which the neighborhood abounded. On the margin of the sea he perceived many trees which, as he thought, produced the *mirabolane*, a fruit only found in the countries of the East. There were great numbers also of mangroves growing within the water, with oysters clinging to their branches, their mouths open, as he supposed, to receive the dew, which was afterwards to be transformed to pearls.*

On the following morning, the 14th of August, towards noon, the ships approached the Boca del Dragon and prepared to venture through that formidable pass. The distance from Cape Boto at the end of Paria and Cape Lapa the extremity of Trinidad is about five leagues; but in the interval there were two islands, which Columbus named Caracol and Delphin. The impetuous body of fresh water which flows through the gulf, particularly in the rainy months of July and August, is confined at the narrow outlets between these isl-

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. ii., cap. 10.

ands, where it causes a turbulent sea, foaming and roaring as if breaking over rocks, and rendering the entrance and exit of the gulf extremely dangerous. The horrors and perils of such places are always tenfold to discoverers, who have no chart nor pilot nor advice of previous voyager to guide them. Columbus at first apprehended sunken rocks and shoals, but on attentively considering the commotion of the strait, he attributed it to the conflict between the prodigious body of fresh water setting through the gulf and struggling for an outlet and the tide of salt water struggling to enter. The ships had scarcely ventured into the fearful channel when the wind died away, and they were in danger every moment of being thrown upon the rocks or sands. The current of fresh water, however, gained the victory and carried them safely through. The Admiral when once more safe in the open sea congratulated himself upon his escape from this perilous strait, which, he observes, might well be called the Mouth of the Dragon.*

He now stood to the westward, running along the outer coast of Paria, still supposing it an island, and intending to visit the Gulf of Pearls, which he imagined to be at the end of it, opening to the sea. He wished to ascertain

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 11.

whether this great body of fresh water proceeded from rivers, as the crew of the caravel *Correo* had affirmed, for it appeared to him impossible that the streams of mere islands, as he supposed the surrounding lands, could produce such a prodigious volume of water.

On leaving the Boca del Dragon he saw to the northeast, many leagues distant, two islands, which he called Assumption and Conception, probably those now known as Tobago and Granada. In his course along the northern coast of Paria he saw several other small islands and many fine harbors, to some of which he gave names, but they have ceased to be known by them. On the 15th he discovered the islands of Margarita and Cubagua, afterwards famous for their pearl fishery. The island of Margarita, about fifteen leagues in length and six in breadth, was well peopled. The little island of Cubagua, lying between it and the mainland, and only about four leagues from the latter, was dry and sterile, without either wood or fresh water, but possessing a good harbor. On approaching this island the Admiral beheld a number of Indians fishing for pearls, who made for the land. A boat being sent to communicate with them, one of the sailors noticed many strings of pearls round the neck of a female. Having a plate of Va-

lencia ware, a kind of porcelain painted and varnished with gaudy colors, he broke it and presented the pieces to the Indian woman, who gave him in exchange a considerable number of her pearls. These he carried to the Admiral, who immediately sent persons on shore, well provided with Valencia plates and hawks'-bells, for which in a little time he procured about three pounds' weight of pearls, some of which were of a very large size, and were sent by him afterwards to the sovereigns as specimens.*

There was great temptation to visit other spots, which the Indians mentioned as abounding in pearls. The coast of Paria also continued extending to the westward as far as the eye could reach, rising into a range of mountains and provoking examination to ascertain whether, as he began to think, it was a part of the Asiatic continent. Columbus was compelled, however, though with the greatest reluctance, to forego this most interesting investigation.

The malady of his eyes had now grown so virulent that he could no longer take observations or keep a lookout, but had to trust to the reports of the pilots and the mariners. He bore away, therefore, for Hispaniola, intending

* Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. iii., p. 169.

to repose there from the toils of his voyage and to recruit his health, while he should send his brother, the Adelantado, to complete the discovery of this important country. After sailing for five days to the northwest, he made the island of Hispaniola on the 19th of August, fifty leagues to the westward of the river Ozema, the place of his destination, and anchored on the following morning under the little island of Beata.

He was astonished to find himself so mistaken in his calculations and so far below his destined port; but he attributed it correctly to the force of the current setting out of the Boca del Dragon, which, while he had lain to at nights, to avoid running on rocks and shoals, had borne his ship insensibly to the west. This current, which sets across the Caribbean Sea, and the continuation of which now bears the name of the Gulf Stream, was so rapid that on the 15th, though the wind was but moderate, the ships had made seventy-five leagues in four-and-twenty hours. Columbus attributed to the violence of this current the formation of that pass called the Boca del Dragon, where he supposed it had forced its way through a narrow isthmus that formerly connected Trinidad with the extremity of Paria. He imagined also that its constant

operation had worn away and inundated the borders of the mainland, gradually producing that fringe of islands which stretches from Trinidad to the Lucayos or Bahamas, and which, according to his idea, had originally been part of the solid continent. In corroboration of this opinion he notices the form of those islands; narrow from north to south, and extending in length from east to west in the direction of the current.*

The island of Beata, where he was anchored, is about thirty leagues to the west of the river Ozema, where he expected to find the new seaport which his brother had been instructed to establish. The strong and steady current from the east, however, and the prevalence of winds from that quarter might detain him for a long time at the island and render the remainder of his voyage slow and precarious. He sent a boat on shore, therefore, to procure an Indian messenger to take a letter to his brother, the Adelantado. Six of the natives came off to the ships, one of whom was armed with a Spanish cross-bow. The Admiral was alarmed at seeing a weapon of the kind in the possession of an Indian. It was not an article of traffic, and he feared

* Letter to the King and Queen, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

could only have fallen into his hands by the death of some Spaniard.* He apprehended that further evils had befallen the settlement during his long absence, and that there had again been trouble with the natives.

Having despatched his messenger he made sail, and arrived off the mouth of the river on the 30th of August. He was met on the way by a caravel, on board of which was the Adelantado, who having received his letter, had hastened forth with affectionate ardor to welcome his arrival. The meeting of the brothers was a cause of mutual joy; they were strongly attached to each other, each had had his trials and sufferings during their long separation, and each looked with confidence to the other for comfort and relief. Don Bartholomew appears to have always had great deference for the brilliant genius, the enlarged mind, and the commanding reputation of his brother; while the latter placed great reliance in times of difficulty on the worldly knowledge, the indefatigable activity, and the lion-hearted courage of the Adelantado.

Columbus arrived almost the wreck of himself. His voyages were always of a nature to wear out the human frame, having to navigate amidst unknown dangers, and to keep anxious

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 148.

watch at all hours and in all weathers. As age and infirmity increased upon him, these trials became the more severe. His constitution must originally have been wonderfully vigorous; but constitutions of this powerful kind, if exposed to severe hardships at an advanced period of life, when the frame has become somewhat rigid and unaccommodating, are apt to be suddenly broken up and to be a prey to violent aches and maladies. In this last voyage Columbus had been parched and consumed by fever, racked by gout and his whole system disordered by incessant watchfulness; he came into port haggard, emaciated, and almost blind. His spirit however was as usual superior to all bodily affliction or decay, and he looked forward with magnificent anticipations to the result of his recent discoveries, which he intended should be immediately prosecuted by his hardy and enterprising brother.

Chapter IV.

SPECULATIONS OF COLUMBUS CONCERNING THE COAST OF PARIA.

[1498.]

THE natural phenomena of a great and striking nature presented to the ardent mind of Columbus in the course of this voyage, led to certain sound deductions and imaginative speculations. The immense body of fresh water flowing into the gulf of Paria, and thence rushing into the ocean, was too vast to be produced by an island or by islands. It must be the congregated streams of a great extent of country pouring forth in one mighty river, and the land necessary to furnish such a river must be a continent. He now supposed that most of the tracts of land which he had seen about the gulf were connected; that the coast of Paria extended westward far beyond a chain of mountains which he had beheld afar off from

Margarita; and that the land opposite to Trinidad, instead of being an island, continued to the south, far beyond the equator, into that hemisphere hitherto unknown to civilized man. He considered all this an extension of the Asiatic continent; thus presuming that the greater part of the surface of the globe was firm land. In this last opinion he found himself supported by authors of the highest name, both ancient and modern; among whom he cites Aristotle and Seneca, St. Augustine and Cardinal Pedro de Aliaco. He lays particular stress also on the assertion of the apocryphal Esdras, that of seven parts of the world, six are dry land, and one part only is covered with water.

The land, therefore, surrounding the gulf of Paria was but the border of an almost boundless continent, stretching far to the west and to the south, including the most precious regions of the earth, lying under the most auspicious stars and benignant skies, but as yet unknown and uncivilized, free to be discovered and appropriated by any Christian nation.

"May it please our Lord," he exclaims in his letter to the sovereigns, "to give long life and health to your highnesses, that you may prosecute this noble enterprise, in which, methinks, God will receive

great service, Spain vast increase of grandeur, and all Christians much consolation and delight, since the name of our Saviour will be divulged throughout these lands."

Thus far the deductions of Columbus, though sanguine, admit of little cavil; but he carried them still farther, until they ended in what may appear to some mere chimerical reveries. In his letter to the sovereigns he stated that, on his former voyages, when he steered westward from the Azores, he had observed after sailing about a hundred leagues, a sudden and great change in the sky and the stars, the temperature of the air, and the calmness of the ocean. It seemed as if a line ran from north to south, beyond which everything became different. The needle which had previously inclined toward the northeast, now varied a whole point to the northwest. The sea, hitherto clear, was covered with weeds, so dense, that, in his first voyage he had expected to run aground upon shoals. A universal tranquillity reigned throughout the elements, and the climate was mild and genial whether in summer or winter. On taking his astronomical observations at night, after crossing that imaginary line, the north star appeared to him to describe a diurnal circle in the heavens, of five degrees in diameter.

On his present voyage he had varied his route, and had run southward from the Cape Verde Islands for the equinoctial line. Before reaching it however the heat had become insupportable, and a wind springing up from the east, he had been induced to strike westward when in the parallel of Sierra Leone in Guinea. For several days he had been almost consumed by scorching and stifling heat under a sultry yet clouded sky, and in a drizzling atmosphere, until he arrived at the ideal line already mentioned, extending from north to south. Here suddenly, to his great relief, he had emerged into serene weather, with a clear blue sky and a sweet and temperate atmosphere. The farther he had proceeded west, the more pure and genial he had found the climate; the sea tranquil, the breezes soft and balmy. All these phenomena coincided with those he had remarked at the same line, though farther north, in his former voyages; excepting that here there was no herbage in the sea, and the movements of stars were different. The polar star appeared to him here to describe a diurnal circle of ten degrees instead of five; an augmentation which struck him with astonishment, but which he says he ascertained by observations taken in different nights, with his quadrant. Its greatest

altitude at the former place, in the parallel of the Azores, he had found to be ten degrees, and in the present place fifteen.

From these and other circumstances he was inclined to doubt the received theory with respect to the form of the earth. Philosophers

PORTRAIT OF COLUMBUS.

had described it as spherical, but they knew nothing of the part of the world which he had discovered. The ancient part known to them he had no doubt was spherical, but he now supposed the real form of the earth to be that of a pear, one part much more elevated

than the rest, and tapering upward toward the skies. This part he supposed to be in the interior of this newly found continent, and immediately under the equator. All the phenomena which he had previously noticed, appeared to corroborate this theory. The variations which he had observed in passing the imaginary line running from north to south, he concluded to be caused by the ships having arrived at this supposed swelling of the earth, where they began gently to mount towards the skies into a purer and more celestial atmosphere.* The variation of the needle he ascribed to the same cause, being affected by the coolness and mildness of the climate—varying to the northwest in proportion as the ships continued onward in their ascent.† So also the altitude of the north star, and the circle it described in the heavens, appeared to be greater, in consequence of being regarded from a greater elevation, less obliquely, and through a purer medium of atmosphere; and these

* Peter Martyr mentions that the Admiral told him, that, from the climate of great heat and unwholesome air, he had ascended the back of the sea, as it were ascending a high mountain toward heaven. Decad. i., lib. vi.

† Columbus, in his attempts to account for the variation of the needle, supposed that the north star possessed the quality of the four cardinal points, as

phenomena would be found to increase the more the navigator approached the equator, from the still increasing eminence of this part of the earth.

He noticed also the difference of climate, vegetation, and people of this part of the New World from those under the same parallel in Africa. There the heat was insupportable, the land parched and sterile, the inhabitants were black, with crisped wool, ill-shapen in their forms, and dull and brutal in their natures. Here on the contrary, although the sun was in Leo, he found the noontide heat moderate, the mornings and evenings fresh and cool, the country green and fruitful and covered with beautiful forests, the people fairer even than those in the lands he had discovered farther north, having long hair with well-proportioned and graceful forms, lively minds, and courageous dispositions. All this, in a latitude so near to the equator, he attributed to the superior altitude of this part of the world, by which it was raised into a more

did likewise the loadstone. That if the needle were touched with one part of the loadstone, it would point east, with another west, and so on. Wherefore, he adds, those who prepare or magnetize the needles, cover the loadstone with a cloth, so that the north part only remains out; that is to say, the part which possesses the virtue of causing the needle to point to the north.—*Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 66.

celestial region of the air. On turning northward through the gulf of Paria, he had found the circle described by the north star again to diminish. The current of the sea also increased in velocity, wearing away, as has already been remarked, the harbors of the continent, and producing by its incessant operation the adjacent islands. This was a further confirmation of the idea that he ascended in going southward, and descended in returning northward.

Aristotle had imagined that the highest part of the earth and nearest to the skies was under the antarctic pole. Other sages had maintained that it was under the arctic. Hence it was apparent that both conceived one part of the earth to be more elevated and noble and nearer to the heavens than the rest. They did not think of this eminence being under the equinoctial line, observed Columbus, because they had no certain knowledge of this hemisphere, but only spoke of it theoretically and from conjecture.

As usual he assisted his theory by Holy Writ. "The sun, when God created it," he observes, "was in the first point of the Orient or the first light was there." That place, according to his idea, must be here, in the remotest part of the East, where the ocean and the extreme part of India meet under the equi-

noctial line and where the highest point of the earth is situated.

He supposed this apex of the world, though of immense height, to be neither rugged nor precipitous, but that the land rose to it by gentle and imperceptible degrees. The beautiful and fertile shores of Paria were situated on its remote borders, abounding of course with those precious articles which are congenial with the most favored and excellent climates. As one penetrated the interior and gradually ascended, the land would be found to increase in beauty and luxuriance and in the exquisite nature of its productions, until one arrived at the summit under the equator. This he imagined to be the noblest and most perfect place on earth, enjoying from its position an equality of nights and days and a uniformity of seasons and being elevated into a serene and heavenly temperature, above the heats and colds, the clouds and vapors, the storms and tempests which deform and disturb the lower regions. In a word, here he supposed to be situated the original abode of our first parents, the primitive seat of human innocence and bliss, the Garden of Eden, or terrestrial paradise!

He imagined this place, according to the opinion of the most eminent fathers of the Church, to be still flourishing, possessed of all

its blissful delights, but inaccessible to mortal feet, excepting by divine permission. From this height he presumed, though of course from a great distance, proceeded the mighty stream of fresh water which filled the gulf of Paria and sweetened the salt ocean in its vicinity, being supplied by the fountain mentioned in Genesis as springing from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Such was the singular speculation of Columbus, which he details at full length in a letter to the Castilian sovereigns,* citing various authorities for his opinions, among which were St. Augustine, St. Isidor, and St. Ambrosius, and fortifying his theory with much of that curious and speculative erudition in which he was deeply versed.† It shows how

* Navarrete, *Colec. de Viages*, tom. i., p. 242.

† See Appendix, article "Situation of the Terrestrial Paradise."

NOTE.—A great part of these speculations appear to have been founded on the treatise of the Cardinal Pedro de Aliaco, in which Columbus found a compendium of the opinions of various eminent authors on the subject, though it is very probable he consulted many of their works likewise. In the volume of Pedro de Aliaco, existing in the library of the Cathedral at Seville, I have traced the germs of these ideas in various passages of the text, opposite to which marginal notes have been made in the handwriting of Columbus.

his ardent mind was heated by the magnificence of his discoveries. Shrewd men, in the coolness and quietude of ordinary life, and in these modern days of cautious and sober fact, may smile at such a revery, but it was countenanced by the speculations of the most sage and learned of those times. And if this had not been the case could we wonder at any sally of the imagination in a man placed in the situation of Columbus? He beheld a vast world rising as it were into existence before him, its nature and extent unknown and undefined, as yet a mere region for conjecture. Every day displayed some new feature of beauty and sublimity; island after island, where the rocks, he was told, were veined with gold, the groves teemed with spices, or the shores abounded with pearls. Interminable ranges of coast, promontory beyond promontory, stretching as far as the eye could reach; luxuriant valleys sweeping away into a vast interior, whose distant mountains, he was told, concealed still happier lands and realms of greater opulence. When he looked upon all this region of golden promise it was with the glorious conviction that his genius had called it into existence; he regarded it with the triumphant eye of a discoverer. Had not Columbus been capable of these enthusiastic soarings of the imagina-

tion he might, with other sages, have reasoned calmly and coldly in his closet about the probability of a continent existing in the west; but he never would have had the daring enterprise to adventure in search of it into the unknown realms of ocean.

Still, in the midst of his fanciful speculations, we find that sagacity which formed the basis of his character. The conclusion which he drew from the great flow of the Orinoco, that it must be the outpouring of a continent, was acute and striking. A learned Spanish historian has also ingeniously excused other parts of his theory.

"He suspected," observes he, "a certain elevation of the globe at one part of the equator; philosophers have since determined the world to be a spheroid, slightly elevated in its equatorial circumference. He suspected that the diversity of temperature influenced the needle, not being able to penetrate the cause of its inconstant variations; the successive series of voyages and experiments have made this inconstancy more manifest, and have shown that extreme cold sometimes divests the needle of all its virtues. Perhaps new observations may justify the surmise of Columbus. Even his error concerning the circle described by the polar star, which he thought augmented by an optical illusion in proportion as the observer approached the equinox, manifests him a philosopher superior to the time in which he lived." *

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi., § 32.

Book II.

Chapter I.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE ADELANTADO—EXPEDITION TO THE PROVINCE OF XARAGUA.

[1498.]

COLUMBUS had anticipated repose from his toils on arriving at Hispaniola, but a new scene of trouble and anxiety opened upon him, destined to impede the prosecution of his enterprises and to affect all his future fortunes. To explain this it is necessary to relate the occurrences of the island during his long detention in Spain.

When he had sailed for Europe in March, 1496, his brother, Don Bartholomew, who remained as Adelantado, took the earliest measures to execute his directions with respect to the mines recently discovered by Miguel Diaz on the south side of the island. Leaving Don Diego Columbus in command at Isabella, he repaired with a large force to the neighborhood of the mines, and choosing a

favorable situation in a place most abounding in ore, built a fortress, to which he gave the name of San Christoval. The workmen however finding grains of gold among the earth and stone employed in its construction, gave it the name of the Golden Tower. *

The Adelantado remained here three months, superintending the building of the fortress, and making the necessary preparations for working the mines and purifying the ore. The progress of the work however was greatly impeded by the scarcity of provisions, having frequently to detach a part of the men about the country in quest of supplies. The former hospitality of the island was at an end. The Indians no longer gave their provisions freely; they had learnt from the white man to profit by the necessities of the stranger, and to exact a price for bread. Their scanty stores, also, were soon exhausted, for their frugal habits and their natural indolence and improvidence seldom permitted them to have more provisions on hand than was requisite for present support.† The Adelantado found it difficult, therefore, to maintain so large a force in the neighborhood, until they should have time to cultivate the earth and raise live-stock, or should receive

* Peter Martyr, decad. i., lib. iv.

† *Ibid.*, decad. i., lib. v.

supplies from Spain. Leaving ten men to guard the fortress, with a dog to assist them in catching utias, he marched with the rest of the men, about four hundred in number, to Fort Conception, in the abundant country of the Vega. He passed the whole month of June collecting the quarterly tribute, being supplied with food by Guarionex and his subordinate caciques. In the following month (July, 1496) the three caravels commanded by Niño arrived from Spain, bringing a reinforcement of men and, what was still more needed, a supply of provisions. The latter was quickly distributed among the hungry colonists, but unfortunately a great part had been injured during the voyage. This was a serious misfortune in a community where the least scarcity produced murmur and sedition.

By these ships the Adelantado received letters from his brother directing him to found a town and seaport at the mouth of the Ozema, near to the new mines. He requested him also to send prisoners to Spain such of the caciques and their subjects as had been concerned in the death of any of the colonists, that being considered as sufficient ground, by many of the ablest jurists and theologians of Spain, for selling them as slaves. On the return of the caravels, the Adelantado despatched three hun-

dred Indian prisoners and three caciques. These formed the ill-starred cargoes about which Niño had made such absurd vaunting, as though the ships were laden with treasure; and which caused such mortification, disappointment, and delay to Columbus.

Having obtained by this arrival a supply of provisions, the Adelantado returned to the fortress of San Christoval, and thence proceeded to the Ozema to choose a site for the proposed seaport. After a careful examination he chose the eastern bank of a natural haven at the mouth of the river. It was easy of access, of sufficient depth, and good anchorage. The river ran through a beautiful and fertile country; its waters were pure and salubrious and well stocked with fish; its banks were covered with trees bearing the fine fruits of the island, so that in sailing along the fruits and flowers might be plucked with the hand from the branches which overhung the stream.* This delightful vicinity was the dwelling-place of the female cacique who had conceived an affection for the young Spaniard, Miguel Diaz, and had induced him to entice his countrymen to that part of the island. The promise she had given of a friendly reception on the part of her tribe was faithfully performed.

* Peter Martyr, decad. i., lib. v.

On a commanding bank of the harbor, Don Bartholomew erected a fortress, which at first was called Isabella, but afterwards San Domingo, and was the origin of the city which still bears that name. The Adelantado was of an active and indefatigable spirit. No sooner was the fortress completed than he left in it a garrison of twenty men, and with the rest of his forces set out to visit the dominions of Behechio, one of the principal chieftains of the island. This cacique, as has been already mentioned, reigned over Xaragua, a province comprising almost the whole coast at the west end of the island, including Cape Tiburon, and extending along the south side as far as Point Aguido, or the small island of Beata. It was one of the most populous and fertile districts, with a delightful climate; and its inhabitants were softer and more graceful in their manners than the rest of the islanders. Being so remote from all the fortresses, the Cacique, although he had taken a part in the combination of the chieftains, had hitherto remained free from the incursions and exactions of the white men.

With this cacique resided Anacaona, widow of the late formidable Caonabo. She was sister to Behechio, and had taken refuge with her brother after the capture of her husband. She was one of the most beautiful females of the

island; her name in the Indian language signified "The Golden Flower." She possessed a genius superior to the generality of her race, and was said to excel in composing those little legendary ballads, or *areytos*, which the natives chanted as they performed their national dances. All the Spanish writers agree in describing her as possessing a natural dignity and grace hardly to be credited in her ignorant and savage condition. Notwithstanding the ruin with which her husband had been overwhelmed by the hostility of the white men, she appears to have entertained no vindictive feeling towards them, knowing that he had provoked their vengeance by his own voluntary warfare. She regarded the Spaniards with admiration as almost superhuman beings, and her intelligent mind perceived the futility and impolicy of any attempt to resist their superiority in arts and arms. Having great influence over her brother Behechio, she counselled him to take warning by the fate of her husband, and to conciliate the friendship of the Spaniards; and it is supposed that a knowledge of the friendly sentiments and powerful influences of this Princess in a great measure prompted the Adelantado to his present expedition.*

* Charlevoix, *Hist. St. Domingo*, lib. ii., p. 147. Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi., § 6.

In passing through those parts of the island which had hitherto been unvisited by Europeans, the Adelantado adopted the same imposing measures which the Admiral had used on a former occasion; he put his cavalry in the advance, and entered all the Indian towns in martial array, with standards displayed and the sound of drum and trumpet.

After proceeding about thirty leagues he came to the river Neyva, which issuing from the mountains of Cibao, divides the southern side of the island. Crossing this stream, he despatched two parties of ten men each along the sea-coast in search of brazil-wood. They found great quantities and felled many trees, which they stored in the Indian cabins until they could be taken away by sea.

Inclining with his main force to the right, the Adelantado met, not far from the river, the Cacique Behechio, with a great army of his subjects armed with bows and arrows and lanses. If he had come forth with the intention of opposing the inroad into his forest domains he was probably daunted by the formidable appearance of the Spaniards. Laying aside his weapons he advanced and accosted the Adelantado very amicably, professing that he was thus in arms for the purpose of subduing certain villages along the river, and inquiring at

the same time the object of this incursion of the Spaniards. The Adelantado assured him that he came on a peaceful visit to pass a little time in friendly intercourse at Xaragua. He succeeded so well in allaying the apprehensions of the Cacique, that the latter dismissed his army, and sent swift messengers to order preparations for the suitable reception of so distinguished a guest. As the Spaniards advanced into the territories of the chieftain, and passed through the districts of his inferior caciques, the latter brought forward cassava bread, hemp, cotton, and various other productions of the land. At length they drew near to the residence of Behechio, which was a large town situated in a beautiful part of the country near the coast, at the bottom of that deep bay, called at present the Bight of Leogan.

The Spaniards had heard many accounts of the soft and delightful region of Xaragua, in one part of which Indian traditions placed their Elysian fields. They had heard much, also, of the beauty and urbanity of the inhabitants: the mode of their reception was calculated to confirm their favorable prepossessions. As they approached the place thirty females of the Cacique's household came forth to meet them, singing their *areytos*, or traditionary bal-

lads, and dancing and waving palm branches. The married females wore aprons of embroidered cotton, reaching half-way to the knee; the young women were entirely naked, with merely a fillet round the forehead, their hair falling upon their shoulders. They were beautifully proportioned; their skin smooth and delicate, and their complexion of a clear agreeable brown. According to old Peter Martyr, the Spaniards, when they beheld them issuing forth from their green woods, almost imagined they beheld the fabled dryads, or native nymphs and fairies of the fountains, sung by the ancient poets.* When they came before Don Bartholomew, they knelt and gracefully presented him the green branches. After these came the female Cacique Anacaona, reclining on a kind of light litter borne by six Indians. Like the other females, she had no other covering than an apron of various-colored cotton. She wore round her head a fragrant garland of red and white flowers, and wreaths of the same round her neck and arms. She received the Adelantado and his followers with that natural grace and courtesy for which she was celebrated; manifesting no hostility toward them for the fate her husband had experienced at their hands.

* Peter Martyr, decad. i., lib. v.

The Adelantado and his officers were conducted to the house of Behechio, where a banquet was served up of utias, a great variety of sea and river fish, with roots and fruits of excellent quality. Here first the Spaniards conquered their repugnance to the guana, the favorite delicacy of the Indians, but which the former had regarded with disgust, as a species of serpent. The Adelantado, willing to accustom himself to the usages of the country, was the first to taste this animal, being kindly pressed thereto by Anacaona. His followers imitated his example. They found it to be highly palatable and delicate, and from that time forward, the guana was held in repute among Spanish epicures.*

* "These serpentes are lyke unto crocodiles, saving in bygness; they call them guanas. Unto that day none of owre men durste adventure to taste of them, by reason of theyre horrible deformitie and lothsomnes. Yet the Adelantado being entysed by the pleasantnes of the king's sister, Anacaona, determined to taste the serpentes. But when he felte the flesh thereof to be so delycate to his tongue, he fel to amayne without al feare. The which thyng his companions perceiving, were not behynd hym in greedynesse: insomuche that they had now none other talke than of the sweetnesse of these serpentes, which they affirm to be of more pleasant taste, than eyther our phesantes or partriches."—Peter Martyr, decad. i., book v. Eden's English Translation.

The banquet being over, Don Bartholomew with six of his principal cavaliers were lodged in the dwelling of Behechio; the rest were distributed in the houses of the inferior caciques, where they slept in hammocks of matted cotton, the usual beds of the natives.

For two days they remained with the hospitable Behechio, entertained with various Indian games and festivities, among which the most remarkable was the representation of a battle. Two squadrons of naked Indians, armed with bows and arrows, sallied suddenly into the public square and began to skirmish in a manner similar to the Moorish play of canes, or tilting reeds. By degrees they became excited, and fought with such earnestness that four were slain, and many wounded, which seemed to increase the interest and pleasure of the spectators. The contest would have continued longer, and might have been still more bloody, had not the Adelantado and the other cavaliers interfered and begged that the game might cease.*

When the festivities were over and familiar intercourse had promoted mutual confidence, the Adelantado addressed the Cacique and Anacaona on the real object of his visit. He informed him that his brother the Admiral had

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 113.

been sent to this island by the sovereigns of Castile, who were great and mighty potentates, with many kingdoms under their sway. That the Admiral had returned to apprise his sovereigns how many tributary caciques there were in the island, leaving him in command, and that he had come to receive Behechio under the protection of these mighty sovereigns, and to arrange a tribute to be paid by him in such manner as should be most convenient and satisfactory to himself.*

The Cacique was greatly embarrassed by this demand, knowing the sufferings inflicted on the other parts of the island by the avidity of the Spaniards for gold. He replied that he had been apprised that gold was the great object for which the white men had come to their island, and that a tribute was paid in it by some of his fellow caciques, but that in no part of his territories was gold to be found, and his subjects hardly knew what it was. To this the Adelantado replied with great adroitness that nothing was farther from the intention or wish of his sovereigns than to require a tribute in things not produced in his dominions, but that it might be paid in cotton, hemp, and cassava bread, with which the surrounding country appeared to abound. The counte-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 114.

nance of the Cacique brightened at this intimation; he promised cheerful compliance, and instantly sent orders to all his subordinate caciques to sow abundance of cotton for the first payment of the stipulated tribute. Having made all the requisite arrangements, the Adelantado took a most friendly leave of Behechio and his sister and set out for Isabella.

Thus by amicable and sagacious management one of the most extensive provinces of the island was brought into cheerful subjection, and had not the wise policy of the Adelantado been defeated by the excesses of worthless and turbulent men, a large revenue might have been collected, without any recourse to violence or oppression. In all instances these simple people appear to have been extremely tractable, and meekly and even cheerfully to have resigned their rights to the white men, when treated with gentleness and humanity.

Chapter II.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CHAIN OF MILITARY POSTS—INSURRECTION OF GUARIONEX, THE CACIQUE OF THE VEGA.

[1496.]

ON arriving at Isabella Don Bartholomew found it, as usual, a scene of misery and repining. Many had died during his absence; most were ill. Those who were healthy complained of the scarcity of food, and those who were ill, of the want of medicines. The provisions distributed among them, from the supply brought out a few months before by Pedro Alonzo Niño, had been consumed. Partly from sickness and partly from a repugnance to labor they had neglected to cultivate the surrounding country, and the Indians, on whom they chiefly depended, outraged by their oppressions, had abandoned the vicinity and fled to the mountains, choosing rather to subsist on roots and

herbs in their rugged retreats, than remain in the luxuriant plains subject to the wrongs and cruelties of the white men. The history of this island presents continual pictures of the miseries, the actual want and poverty produced by the grasping avidity for gold. It had rendered the Spaniards heedless of all the less obvious but more certain and salubrious sources of wealth. All labor seemed lost that was to produce profit by a circuitous process. Instead of cultivating the luxuriant soil around them and deriving real treasures from its surface, they wasted their time in seeking for mines and golden streams, and were starving in the midst of fertility.

No sooner were the provisions exhausted which had been brought out by Niño than the colonists began to break forth in their accustomed murmurs. They represented themselves as neglected by Columbus, who, amid the blandishments and delights of a court, thought little of their sufferings. They considered themselves equally forgotten by government, while, having no vessel in the harbor, they were destitute of all means of sending home intelligence of their disastrous situation, and imploring relief.

To remove this last cause of discontent and furnish some object for their hopes and

thoughts to rally round, the Adelantado ordered that two caravels should be built at Isabella for the use of the island. To relieve the settlement also from all useless and repining individuals, during this time of scarcity, he distributed such as were too ill to labor or to bear arms into the interior, where they would have the benefit of a better climate and more abundant supply of Indian provisions. He at the same time completed and garrisoned the chain of military posts established by his brother in the preceding year, consisting of five fortified houses, each surrounded by its dependent hamlet. The first of these was about nine leagues from Isabella, and was called La Esperanza. Six leagues beyond was Santa Catalina. Four leagues and a half farther was Magdalena, where the first town of Santiago was afterwards founded; and five leagues farther, Fort Conception, which was fortified with great care, being in the vast and populous Vega, and within half a league from the residence of its Cacique Guarionex.* Having thus relieved Isabella of all its useless population, and left none but such as were too

* P. Martyr, decad. i., lib. v. Of the residence of Guarionex, which must have been a considerable town, not the least vestige can be discovered at present.

ill to be removed or were required for the service and protection of the place and the construction of the caravels, the Adelantado returned with a large body of the most effective men to the fortress of San Domingo.

The military posts thus established succeeded for a time in overawing the natives; but fresh hostilities were soon manifested, excited by a different cause from the preceding. Among the missionaries who had accompanied Friar Boyle to the island, were two of far greater zeal than their superior. When he returned to Spain they remained, earnestly bent upon the fulfilment of their mission. One was called Roman Pane, a poor hermit as he styled himself of the order of St. Geronimo; the other was Juan Borgoñon, a Franciscan. They resided for some time among the Indians of the Vega, strenuously endeavoring to make converts, and had succeeded with one family of sixteen persons, the chief of which on being baptized took the name of Juan Mateo. The conversion of the Cacique Guarionex however was their main object. The extent of his possessions made his conversion of great importance to the interests of the colony, and was considered by the zealous fathers a means of bringing his numerous subjects under the dominion of the Church. For some time he

lent a willing ear, he learnt the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, and the Creed, and made his whole family repeat them daily. The other caciques of the Vega and of the provinces of Cibao however scoffed at him for meanly conforming to the laws and customs of strangers, usurpers of his domains, and oppressors of his nation. The friars complained that in consequence of these evil communications their convert suddenly relapsed into infidelity; but another and more grievous cause is assigned for his recantation. His favorite wife was seduced or treated with outrage by a Spaniard of authority, and the Cacique renounced all faith in a religion which, as he supposed, admitted of such atrocities. Losing all hope of effecting his conversion the missionaries removed to the territories of another cacique, taking with them Juan Mateo, their Indian convert. Before their departure they erected a small chapel, and furnished it with an altar, crucifix, and images, for the use of the family of Mateo.

Scarcely had they departed, when several Indians entered the chapel, broke the images in pieces, trampled them under foot, and buried them in a neighboring field. This, it was said, was done by the order of Guarionex, in contempt of the religion which he had apos-

tatized. A complaint of this enormity was carried to the Adelantado, who ordered a suit to be immediately instituted, and those who were found culpable to be punished according to law. It was a period of great rigor in ecclesiastical law, especially among the Spaniards. In Spain all heresies in religion, all recantations from the Faith, and all acts of sacrilege, either by Moor or Jew, were punished with fire and fagot. Such was the fate of the poor ignorant Indians convicted of this outrage on the Church. It is questionable whether Guarionex had any hand in this offence, and it is probable that the whole affair was exaggerated. A proof of the credit due to the evidence brought forward, may be judged by one of the facts recorded by Roman Pane, "the poor hermit." The field in which the holy images were buried was planted, he says, with certain roots shaped like a turnip or radish, several of which coming up in the neighborhood of the images, were found to have grown most miraculously in the form of a cross.*

The cruel punishment inflicted on these Indians, instead of daunting their countrymen, filled them with horror and indignation. Unaccustomed to such stern rule and vindictive

* *Escritura de Fr. Roman, Hist. del Almirante.*

justice, and having no clear ideas or powerful sentiments with respect to religion of any kind, they could not comprehend the nature nor extent of the crime committed. Even Guarionex, a man naturally moderate and pacific, was highly incensed with the assumption of power within his territories, and the inhuman death inflicted on his subjects. The other caciques perceived his irritation and endeavored to induce him to unite in a sudden insurrection, that by one vigorous and general effort, they might break the yoke of their oppressors. Guarionex wavered for some time. He knew the martial skill and prowess of the Spaniards, he stood in awe of their cavalry, and he had before him the disastrous fate of Caonabo; but he was rendered bold by despair, and he beheld in the domination of these strangers the assured ruin of his race. The early writers speak of a tradition current among the inhabitants of the island respecting this Guarionex. He was of an ancient line of hereditary caciques. His father, in times long preceding the discovery, having fasted for five days, according to their superstitious observances, applied to his *Zemi*, or household deity, for information of things to come. He received for an answer, that within a few years there would come to the island a nation cov-

ered with clothing, which should destroy all their customs and ceremonies, and slay their children, or reduce them to painful servitude.* The tradition was probably invented by the *Butios*, or priests, after the Spaniards had begun to exercise their severities. Whether their prediction had an effect in disposing the mind of Guarionex to hostilities is uncertain. Some have asserted that he was compelled to take up arms by his subjects, who threatened in case of his refusal to choose some other chieftain; others have alleged the outrage committed upon his favorite wife, as the principal cause of his irritation.† It was probably these things combined which at length induced him to enter into the conspiracy. A secret consultation was held among the caciques, wherein it was concerted that on the day of payment of their quarterly tribute, when a great number could assemble without causing suspicion, they should suddenly rise upon the Spaniards and massacre them.‡

By some means the garrison at Fort Conception received intimation of this conspiracy. Being but a handful of men, and surrounded

* P. Martyr, decad. i., lib. ix.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 121.

‡ Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 65. Peter Martyr, decad. vi., lib. v.

by hostile tribes, they wrote a letter to the Adelantado, at San Domingo, imploring immediate aid. As this letter might be taken from their Indian messenger, the natives having discovered that these letters had a wonderful power of communicating intelligence and fancying they could talk, it was enclosed in a reed, to be used as a staff. The messenger was in fact intercepted, but affecting to be dumb and lame, and intimating by signs that he was returning home, was permitted to limp forward on his journey. When out of sight he resumed his speed, and bore the letter safely and expeditiously to San Domingo.*

The Adelantado, with his characteristic promptness and activity, set out immediately with a body of troops for the fortress; and though his men were much enfeebled by scanty fare, hard service, and long marches, hurried them rapidly forward. Never did aid arrive more opportunely. The Indians were assembled on the plain, to the amount of many thousands, armed after their manner, and waiting for the appointed time to strike the blow. After consulting with the commander of the fortress and his officers, the Adelantado concerted a mode of proceeding. Ascertaining the places in which the various caciques had

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 7.

distributed their forces, he appointed an officer with a body of men to each cacique, with orders, at an appointed hour of the night, to rush into the villages, surprise them asleep and unarmed, bind the caciques, and bring them off prisoners. As Guarionex was the most important personage, and his capture would probably be attended with the most difficulty and danger, the Adelantado took the charge of it upon himself, at the head of one hundred men.

This stratagem, founded upon a knowledge of the attachment of the Indians to their chieftains, and calculated to spare a great effusion of blood, was completely successful. The villages, having no walls nor other defences, were quietly entered at midnight, and the Spaniards, rushing suddenly into the houses where the caciques were quartered, seized and bound them, to the number of fourteen, and hurried them off to the fortress, before any effort could be made for their defence or rescue. The Indians, struck with terror, made no resistance nor any show of hostility ; surrounding the fortress in great multitudes, but without weapons, they filled the air with doleful howlings and lamentations, imploring the release of their chieftains. The Adelantado completed his enterprise with the spirit, sagacity,

and moderation with which he had hitherto conducted it. He obtained information of the causes of this conspiracy, and the individuals most culpable. Two caciques, the principal movers of the insurrection, and who had most wrought upon the easy nature of Guarionex, were put to death. As to that unfortunate cacique, the Adelantado considering the deep wrongs he had suffered, and the slowness with which he had been provoked to revenge, magnanimously pardoned him; nay, according to Las Casas, he proceeded with stern justice against the Spaniard whose outrage on his wife had sunk so deeply in his heart. He extended his lenity also to the remaining chieftains of the conspiracy, promising great favor and rewards if they should continue firm in their loyalty, but terrible punishments should they again be found in rebellion. The heart of Guarionex was subdued by this unexpected clemency. He made a speech to his people, setting forth the irresistible might and valor of the Spaniards—their great lenity to offenders, and their generosity to such as were faithful; and he earnestly exhorted them henceforth to cultivate their friendship. The Indians listened to him with attention; his praises of the white men were confirmed by their treatment of himself; when he had con-

cluded they took him upon their shoulders, bore him to his habitation with songs and shouts of joy, and for some time the tranquillity of the Vega was restored.*

* Peter Martyr, decad. i., lib. v. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 6.

Chapter III.

THE ADELANTADO REPAIRS TO XARAGUA TO RECEIVE TRIBUTE.

[1497.]

WITH all his energy and discretion the Adelantado found it difficult to manage the proud and turbulent spirit of the colonists. They could ill brook the sway of a foreigner, who when they were restive curbed them with an iron hand. Don Bartholomew had not the same legitimate authority in their eyes as his brother. The Admiral was the discoverer of the country, and the authorized representative of the sovereigns; yet even him they with difficulty brought themselves to obey. The Adelantado on the contrary was regarded by many as a mere intruder, assuming high command without authority from the Crown, and shouldering himself into power on the merits and services of his brother. They

spoke with impatience and indignation also of the long absence of the Admiral and his fancied inattention to their wants—little aware of the incessant anxieties he was suffering on their account during his detention in Spain. The sagacious measure of the Adelantado in building the caravels for some time diverted their attention. They watched their progress with solicitude, looking upon them as a means either of obtaining relief or of abandoning the island. Aware that repining and discontented men should never be left in idleness, Don Bartholomew kept them continually in movement; and indeed a state of constant activity was congenial to his own vigorous spirit. About this time messengers arrived from Behechio, Cacique of Xaragua, informing him that he had large quantities of cotton and other articles, in which his tribute was to be paid, ready for delivery. The Adelantado immediately set forth with a numerous train to revisit the fruitful and happy region. He was again received with songs and dances and all the national demonstrations of respect and amity by Behechio and his sister Anacaona. The latter appeared to be highly popular among the natives, and to have almost as much sway in Xaragua as her brother. Her natural ease and the graceful dignity of her

manners more and more won the admiration of the Spaniards.

The Adelantado found thirty-two inferior caciques assembled in the house of Behechio, awaiting his arrival with their respective tributes. The cotton they had brought was enough to fill one of their houses. Having delivered this, they gratuitously offered the Adelantado as much cassava bread as he desired. The offer was most acceptable in the present necessitous state of the colony; and Don Bartholomew sent to Isabella for one of the caravels, which was nearly finished, to be despatched as soon as possible to Xaragua to be freighted with bread and cotton.

In the meantime the natives brought from all quarters large supplies of provisions, and entertained their guests with continual festivity and banqueting. The early Spanish writers, whose imaginations, heated by the accounts of the voyagers, could not form an idea of the simplicity of savage life, especially in these newly discovered countries which were supposed to border upon Asia, often speak in terms of Oriental magnificence of the entertainments of the natives, the palaces of the caciques, and the lords and ladies of their courts, as if they were describing the

abodes of Asiatic potentates. The accounts given of Xaragua however have a different character, and give a picture of savage life in its perfection of idle and ignorant enjoyment. The troubles which distracted the other parts of devoted Hayti had not reached the inhabitants of this pleasant region. Living among beautiful and fruitful groves, on the borders of a sea apparently for ever tranquil and unvexed by storms, having few wants, and those readily supplied, they appeared emancipated from the common lot of labor, and to pass their lives in one uninterrupted holiday. When the Spaniards regarded the fertility and sweetness of this country, the gentleness of its people, and the beauty of its women, they pronounced it a perfect paradise.

At length the caravel arrived which was to be freighted with the articles of tribute. It anchored about six miles from the residence of Behechio, and Anacaona proposed to her brother that they should go together to behold what she called the great canoe of the white men. On their way to the coast the Adelantado was lodged one night in a village, in a house where Anacaona treasured up those articles which she esteemed most rare and precious. They consisted of various manu-

factures of cotton ingeniously wrought, of vessels of clay moulded into different forms, of chairs, tables, and like articles of furniture, formed of ebony and other kinds of wood, and carved with various devices,—all evincing great skill and ingenuity in a people who had no iron tools to work with. Such were the simple treasures of this Indian princess, of which she made numerous presents to her guests.

Nothing could exceed the wonder and delight of this intelligent woman when she first beheld the ship. Her brother, who treated her with a fraternal fondness and respectful attention worthy of civilized life, had prepared two canoes, gaily painted and decorated—one to convey her and her attendants, the other for himself and his chieftains. Anacaona however preferred to embark with her attendants in the ship's boat with the Adelantado. As they approached the caravel a salute was fired. At the report of the cannon and the sight of the smoke, Anacaona, overcome with dismay, fell into the arms of the Adelantado, and her attendants would have leaped overboard, but the laughter and cheerful words of Don Bartholomew speedily reassured them. As they drew nearer to the vessel, several instruments of martial music struck up, with which they were greatly delighted. Their admiration

increased on entering on board. Accustomed only to their simple and slight canoes, everything here appeared wonderfully vast and complicated. But when the anchor was weighed, the sails were spread, and, aided by a gentle breeze, they beheld this vast mass moving apparently by its own volition, veering from side to side, and playing like a huge monster in the deep, the brother and sister remained gazing at each other in mute astonishment.* Nothing seems to have filled the mind of the most stoical savage with more wonder than that sublime and beautiful triumph of genius, a ship under sail.

Having freighted and despatched the caravel, the Adelantado made many presents to Behechio, his sister, and their attendants, and took leave of them, to return by land with his troops to Isabella. Anacaona showed great affliction at their parting, entreating him to remain some time longer with them, and appearing fearful that they had failed in their humble attempt to please him. She even offered to follow him to the settlement, nor would she be consoled until he had promised to return again to Xaragua.†

* Peter Martyr, decad. i., lib. v. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 6.

† Ramusio, vol. iii., p. 9.

We cannot but remark the ability shown by the Adelantado in the course of his transient government of the island. Wonderfully alert and active, he made repeated marches of great extent from one remote province to another, and was always at the post of danger at the critical moment. By skilful management, with a handful of men, he defeated a formidable insurrection without any effusion of blood. He conciliated the most inveterate enemies among the natives by great moderation, while he deterred all wanton hostilities by the infliction of signal punishments. He had made firm friends of the most important chieftains, brought their dominions under cheerful tribute, opened new sources of supplies for the colony, and procured relief from its immediate wants. Had his judicious measures been seconded by those under his command, the whole country would have been a scene of tranquil prosperity, and would have produced great revenues to the Crown without cruelty to the natives; but like his brother the Admiral, his good intentions and judicious arrangements were constantly thwarted by the vile passions and perverse conduct of others. While he was absent from Isabella new mischiefs had been fomented there, which were soon to throw the whole island into confusion.

Chapter IV.

CONSPIRACY OF ROLDAN.

[1497.]

THE prime mover of the present mischief was one Francisco Roldan, a man under the deepest obligations to the Admiral. Raised by him from poverty and obscurity, he had been employed at first in menial capacities; but showing strong natural talents and great assiduity, he had been made ordinary *alcalde*, equivalent to justice of the peace. The able manner in which he acquitted himself in this situation, and the persuasion of his great fidelity and gratitude, induced Columbus, on departing for Spain, to appoint him *alcalde mayor*, or chief judge of the island. It is true he was an uneducated man, but as there were as yet no intricacies of law in the colony, the office required little else than shrewd good sense and upright principles for its discharge.*

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 1.

Roldan was one of those base spirits which grow venomous in the sunshine of prosperity. His benefactor had returned to Spain, apparently under a cloud of disgrace; a long interval had elapsed without tidings from him; he considered him a fallen man, and began to devise how he might profit by his downfall. He was entrusted with an office inferior only to that of the Adelantado. The brothers of Columbus were highly unpopular; he imagined it possible to ruin them, both with the colonists and with the government at home, and by dextrous cunning and bustling activity to work his way into the command of the colony. The vigorous and somewhat austere character of the Adelantado for some time kept him in awe; but when he was absent from the settlement, Roldan was able to carry on his machinations with confidence. Don Diego, who then commanded at Isabella, was an upright and worthy man, but deficient in energy. Roldan felt himself his superior in talent and spirit, and his self-conceit was wounded at being inferior to him in authority. He soon made a party among the daring and dissolute of the community, and secretly loosened the ties of order and good government, by listening to and encouraging the discontents of the common people, and directing them against

the character and conduct of Columbus and his brothers. He had heretofore been employed as superintendent of various public works; this brought him into familiar communication with workmen, sailors, and others of the lower order. His originally vulgar character enabled him to adapt himself to their intellects and manners, while his present station gave him consequence in their eyes. Finding them full of murmurs about hard treatment, severe toil, and the long absence of the Admiral, he affected to be moved by their distresses. He threw out suggestions that the Admiral might never return, being disgraced and ruined in consequence of the representations of Aguado. He sympathized with the hard treatment they experienced from the Adelantado and his brother Don Diego, who, being foreigners, could take no interest in their welfare, nor feel a proper respect for the pride of a Spaniard; but who used them merely as slaves, to build houses and fortresses for them, or to swell their state and secure their power, as they marched about the island enriching themselves with the spoils of the caciques. By these suggestions he exasperated their feelings to such a height that they had at one time formed a conspiracy to take away the life of the Adelantado, as the only means of delivering

themselves from an odious tyrant. The time and place for the perpetration of the act were concerted. The Adelantado had condemned to death a Spaniard of the name of Berahona, a friend of Roldan, and of several of the conspirators. What was his offence is not positively stated, but from a passage in Las Casas,* there is reason to believe that he was the very Spaniard who had violated the favorite wife of Guarionex, the Cacique of the Vega. The Adelantado would be present at the execution. It was arranged therefore that when the populace had assembled, a tumult should be made, as if by accident, and, in the confusion of the moment, Don Bartholomew should be dispatched with a poniard. Fortunately for the Adelantado, he pardoned the criminal, the assemblage did not take place, and the plan of the conspirators was disconcerted.†

When Don Bartholomew was absent collecting the tribute in Xaragua, Roldan thought it was a favorable time to bring affairs to a crisis. He had sounded the feelings of the colonists, and ascertained that there was a large party disposed for open sedition.

His plan was to create a popular tumult, to interpose in his official character of *alcalde*

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 118.

† *Hist del Almirante*, cap. 73.

mayor, to throw the blame upon the oppression and injustice of Don Diego and his brother, and, while he usurped the reins of authority, to appear as if actuated only by zeal for the peace and prosperity of the island and the interests of the sovereigns.

A pretext soon presented itself for the proposed tumult. When the caravel returned from Xaragua laden with the Indian tributes and the cargo was discharged, Don Diego had the vessel drawn up on the land to protect it from accidents or from any sinister designs of the disaffected colonists. Roldan immediately pointed this circumstance out to his partisans. He secretly inveighed against the hardship of having this vessel drawn on shore, instead of being left afloat for the benefit of the colony, or sent to Spain to make known their distresses. He hinted that the true reason was the fear of the Adelantado and his brother lest accounts should be carried to Spain of their misconduct; and he affirmed that they wished to remain undisturbed masters of the island, and keep the Spaniards there as subjects, or rather as slaves. The people took fire at these suggestions. They had long looked forward to the completion of the caravels as their only chance for relief. They now insisted that the vessel should be launched and sent to

Spain for supplies. Don Diego endeavored to convince them of the folly of their demand, the vessel not being rigged and equipped for such a voyage; but the more he attempted to pacify them, the more unreasonable and turbulent they became. Roldan also became more bold and explicit in his instigations. He advised them to launch and take possession of the caravel, as the only mode of regaining their independence. They might then throw off the tyranny of these upstart strangers, enemies in their hearts to Spaniards, and might lead a life of ease and pleasure, sharing equally all that they might gain by barter in the island, employing the Indians as slaves to work for them, and enjoying unrestrained indulgence with respect to the Indian women.*

Don Diego received information of what was fermenting among the people, yet feared to come to an open rupture with Roldan in the present mutinous state of the colony. He suddenly detached him therefore with forty men to the Vega, under pretext of overawing certain of the natives who had refused to pay their tribute, and had shown a disposition to revolt. Roldan made use of this opportunity to strengthen his faction. He made friends and partisans among the discontented caciques,

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 73.

secretly justifying them in their resistance to the imposition of tribute, and promising them redress. He secured the devotion of his own soldiers by great acts of indulgence, disarming and dismissing such as refused full participation in his plans, and returned with his little band to Isabella, where he felt secure of a strong party among the common people.

The Adelantado had by this time returned from Xaragua, but Roldan, feeling himself at the head of a strong faction, and arrogating to himself great authority from his official station, now openly demanded that the caravel should be launched, or permission given to himself and his followers to launch it. The Adelantado peremptorily refused, observing that neither he nor his companions were mariners, nor was the caravel furnished and equipped for sea, and that neither the safety of the vessel, nor of the people should be endangered by their attempt to navigate her.

Roldan perceived that his motives were suspected, and felt that the Adelantado was too formidable an adversary to contend with in any open sedition at Isabella. He determined therefore to cary his plans into operation in some more favorable part of the island, always trusting to excuse any open rebellion against the authority of Don Bartholomew, by repre-

senting it as a patriotic opposition to his tyranny over Spaniards. He had seventy well armed and determined men under his command, and he trusted on erecting his standard to be joined by all the disaffected throughout the island. He set off suddenly therefore for the Vega, intending to surprise the fortress of Conception, and by getting command of that post and the rich country adjacent, to set the Adelantado at defiance.

He stopped on his way at various Indian villages in which the Spaniards were distributed, endeavoring to enlist the latter in his party by holding out promises of great gain and free living. He attempted also to seduce the natives from their allegiance by promising them freedom from all tribute. Those caciques with whom he had maintained a previous understanding, received him with open arms, particularly one who had taken the name of Diego Marque, whose village he made his headquarters, being about two leagues from Fort Conception. He was disappointed in his hopes of surprising the fortress. Its commander, Miguel Ballester, was an old and stanch soldier, both resolute and wary. He drew into his stronghold on the approach of Roldan and closed his gates. His garrison was small but the fortification, situated on the side of a

The Vega Real.

From an old print.

the house, but after a little consideration contented himself with seizing their store of provisions, and then marched towards Fort Conception, which was not quite half a league distant.

The silence of the tomb prevails where their habitations responded to their songs and dances. A few indigent Spaniards, living in miserable hovels, scattered widely apart in the bosom of the forest, are now the sole occupants of this once fruitful and beautiful region.

"A Spanish town gradually grew up round the fortress; the ruins of which extend to a considerable distance. It was destroyed by an earthquake, at nine o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 20th April, 1564, during the celebration of mass. Part of the massive walls of a handsome church still remains, as well as those of a very large convent or hospital, supposed to have been constructed in pursuance of the testamentary dispositions of Columbus. The inhabitants who survived the catastrophe retired to a small chapel on the banks of a river about a league distant, where the new town of La Vega was afterwards built."

Chapter V.

THE ADELANTADO REPAIRS TO THE VEGA IN RELIEF OF FORT CONCEPTION—HIS INTERVIEW WITH ROLDAN.

[1497.]

THE Adelantado had received intelligence of the flagitious proceedings of Roldan, yet hesitated for a time to set out in pursuit of him. He had lost all confidence in the loyalty of the people around him, and knew not how far the conspiracy extended, nor on whom he could rely. Diego de Escobar, alcayde of the Fortress of La Magdalena, together with Adrian de Moxica and Pedro de Valdivieso, all principal men, were in league with Roldan. He feared that the commander of Fort Conception might likewise be in the plot, and the whole island in arms against him. He was reassured however by tidings from Miguel Ballester. That royal veteran wrote to him pressing letters for succor,

representing the weakness of his garrison and the increasing forces of the rebels.

Don Bartholomew hastened to his assistance with his accustomed promptness, and threw himself with a reinforcement into the fortress. Being ignorant of the force of the rebels, and doubtful of the loyalty of his own followers, he determined to adopt mild measures. Understanding that Roldan was quartered at a village but half a league distant, he sent a message to him, remonstrating on the flagrant irregularity of his conduct, the injury it was calculated to produce in the island, and the certain ruin it must bring upon himself, and summoning him to appear at the fortress, pledging his word for his personal safety. Roldan repaired accordingly to Fort Conception, where the Adelantado held a parley with him from a window, demanding the reason of his appearing in arms in opposition to royal authority. Roldan replied boldly that he was in the service of his sovereigns, defending their subjects from the oppression of men who sought their destruction. The Adelantado ordered him to surrender his staff of office, as alcalde mayor, and to submit peaceably to superior authority. Roldan refused to resign his office, or to put himself in the power of Don Bartholomew, whom he charged with seeking his life. He

refused also to submit to any trial, unless commanded by the King. Pretending however to make no resistance to the peaceable exercise of authority, he offered to go with his followers, and reside at any place the Adelantado might appoint. The latter immediately designated the village of the Cacique Diego Colon, the same native of the Lucayos Islands who had been baptized in Spain, and had since married a daughter of Guarionex. Roldan objected, pretending there were not sufficient provisions to be had there for the subsistence of his men, and departed, declaring that he would seek a more eligible residence elsewhere.*

He now proposed to his followers to take possession of the remote provinces of Xaragua. The Spaniards who had returned thence, gave enticing accounts of the life they had led there; of the fertility of the soil, the sweetness of the climate, the hospitality and gentleness of the people, their feasts, dances, and various amusements, and, above all, the beauty of the women—for they had been captivated by the naked charms of the dancing nymphs of Xaragua. In this delightful region, emancipated from the iron rule of the Adelantado, and relieved from the necessity of irksome labor, they might lead

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 7. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 74.

a life of perfect freedom and indulgence, and have a world of beauty at their command. In short, Roldan drew a picture of loose sensual enjoyment, such as he knew to be irresistible with men of idle and dissolute habits. His followers acceded with joy to his proposition. Some preparations however were necessary to carry it into effect. Taking advantage of the absence of the Adelantado, he suddenly marched with his band to Isabella, and entering it in a manner by surprise, endeavored to launch the caravel with which they might sail to Xaragua. Don Diego Columbus, hearing the tumult, issued forth with several cavaliers; but such was the force of the mutineers and their menacing conduct, that he was obliged to withdraw with his adherents into the fortress. Roldan held several parleys with him, and offered to submit to his command, provided he would set himself up in opposition to his brother the Adelantado. His proposition was treated with scorn. The fortress was too strong to be assailed with success; he found it impossible to launch the caravel, and feared the Adelantado might return, and he be inclosed between two forces. He proceeded therefore in all haste to make provisions for the proposed expedition to Xaragua. Still pretending to act in his official capacity, and to

do everything from loyal motives, for the protection and support of the oppressed subjects of the Crown, he broke open the royal warehouse, with shouts of "Long live the King!" supplied his followers with arms, ammunition, clothing, and whatever they desired from the public stores; proceeded to the enclosure where the cattle and other European animals were kept to breed, took such as he thought necessary for his intended establishment, and permitted his followers to kill such of the remainder as they might want for present supply. Having committed this wasteful ravage he marched in triumph out of Isabella.* Reflecting however on the prompt and vigorous character of the Adelantado, he felt that his situation would be but little secure with such an active enemy behind him; who, on extricating himself from present perplexities, would not fail to pursue him to his proposed paradise of Xaragua. He determined therefore to march again to the Vega, and endeavor either to get possession of the person of the Adelantado, or to strike some blow, in his present crippled state, that should disable him from offering further molestation. Returning therefore to the vicinity of Fort Conception, he endeavored in every way, by the

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 74. Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 7.

means of subtle emissaries, to seduce the garrison to desertion, or to excite it to revolt.

The Adelantado dared not take the field with his forces, having no confidence in their fidelity. He knew that they listened wistfully to the emissaries of Roldan, and contrasted the meagre fare and stern discipline of the garrison, with the abundant cheer and easy misrule that prevailed among the rebels. To counteract these seductions, he relaxed from his usual strictness, treating his men with great indulgence, and promising them large rewards. By these means he was enabled to maintain some degree of loyalty among his forces, his service having the advantage over that of Roldan, of being on the side of government and law.

Finding his attempts to corrupt the garrison unsuccessful, and fearing some sudden sally from the vigorous Adelantado, Roldan drew off to a distance, and sought by insidious means to strengthen his own power and weaken that of the government. He asserted equal right to manage the affairs of the island with the Adelantado, and pretended to have separated from him on account of his being passionate and vindictive in the exercise of his authority. He represented him as the tyrant of the Spaniards, the oppressor of the

A Family Group—Hispaniola.

Redrawn from Montani's "America."

to throw off all allegiance to the government. The caciques at a distance ceased to send in their tributes, and those who were in the vicinity were excused by the Adelantado, that by indulgence he might retain their friendship in this time of danger. Roldan's faction daily gained strength. They ranged insolently and at large in the open country and were supported by the misguided natives; while the Spaniards who remained loyal, fearing conspiracies among the natives, had to keep under shelter of the fort, or in the strong houses which they had erected in the villages. The commanders were obliged to palliate all kinds of slights and indignities, both from their soldiers and from the Indians, fearful of driving them to sedition by any severity. The clothing and munitions of all kinds, either for maintenance or defence, were rapidly wasting away, and the want of all supplies or tidings from Spain was sinking the spirits of the well-affected into despondency. The Adelantado was shut up in Fort Conception, in daily expectation of being openly besieged by Roldan, and was secretly informed that means were taken to destroy him, should he issue from the walls of the fortress.*

Such was the desperate state to which the

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 119.

colony was reduced, in consequence of the long detention of Columbus in Spain, and the impediments thrown in the way of all his measures for the benefit of the island by the delays of cabinets and the chicanery of Fonseca and his satellites. At this critical juncture, when faction reigned triumphant, and the colony was on the brink of ruin, tidings were brought to the Vega that Pedro Fernandez Coronal had arrived at the port of San Domingo with two ships, bringing supplies of all kinds, and a strong reinforcement of troops.*

* Las Casas. Herrera, *Hist. del Almirante.*

Chapter VI.

SECOND INSURRECTION OF GUARIONEX, AND HIS FLIGHT TO THE MOUNTAINS OF CIGUAY.

[1498.]

THE arrival of Coronal, which took place on the third of February, was the salvation of the colony. The reinforcements of troops and of supplies of all kinds strengthened the hands of Don Bartholomew. The royal confirmation of his title and authority as Adelantado at once dispelled all doubts as to the legitimacy of his power, and the tidings that the Admiral was in high favor at court and would soon arrive with a powerful squadron, struck consternation into those who had entered into the rebellion on the presumption of his having fallen into disgrace.

The Adelantado no longer remained mewed up in his fortress, but set out immediately for San Domingo with a part of his troops, although a much superior rebel force was at the

village of the Cacique Guarionex at a very short distance. Roldan followed slowly and gloomily with his party, anxious to ascertain the truth of these tidings, to make partisans if possible among those who had newly arrived, and to take advantage of every circumstance that might befriend his rash and hazardous projects. The Adelantado left strong guards on the passes of the roads to prevent his near approach to San Domingo, but Roldan paused within a few leagues of the place.

When the Adelantado found himself secure in San Domingo with his augmentation of force and the prospect of a still greater reinforcement at hand, his magnanimity prevailed over his indignation, and he sought by gentle means to allay the popular seditions, that the island might be restored to tranquillity before his brother's arrival. He considered that the colonists had suffered greatly from the want of supplies, that their discontents had been heightened by the severities he had been compelled to inflict, and that many had been led to rebellion by doubts of the legitimacy of his authority. While, therefore, he proclaimed the royal act sanctioning his title and powers, he promised amnesty for all past offences on condition of immediate return to allegiance. Hearing that Roldan was within five leagues

of San Domingo with his band, he sent Pedro Fernandez Coronal, who had been appointed by the sovereigns *alguazil mayor* of the island, to exhort him to obedience, promising him oblivion to the past. He trusted that the representations of a discreet and honorable man like Coronal, who had been witness of the favor in which his brother stood in Spain, would convince the rebels of the hopelessness of their course.

Roldan, however, conscious of his guilt and doubtful of the clemency of Don Bartholomew, feared to venture within his power. He determined also to prevent his followers from communicating with Coronal, lest they should be seduced from him by the promise of pardon. When that emissary, therefore, approached the encampment of the rebels, he was opposed in a narrow pass by a body of archers with their cross-bows levelled. "Halt there, traitor!" cried Roldan, "had you arrived eight days later we should all have been united as one man."*

In vain Coronal endeavored by fair reasoning and earnest entreaty to win this perverse and turbulent man from his career. Roldan answered with hardihood and defiance, professing to oppose only the tyranny and mis-

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 8.

rule of the Adelantado, but to be ready to submit to the Admiral on his arrival. He and several of his principal confederates wrote letters to the same effect to their friends in San Domingo, urging them to plead their cause with the Admiral when he should arrive, and to assure him of their disposition to acknowledge his authority.

When Coronal returned with accounts of Roldan's contumacy, the Adelantado proclaimed him and his followers traitors. That shrewd rebel, however, did not suffer his men to remain within either the seduction of promise or the terror of menace; he immediately set out on his march for his promised land of Xaragua, trusting to impair every honest principle and virtuous tie of his misguided followers by a life of indolence and libertinage.

In the meantime the mischievous effects of intrigues among the caciques became more and more apparent. No sooner had the Adelantado left Fort Conception, than a conspiracy was formed among the natives to surprise it. Guarionex was at the head of this conspiracy, moved by the instigations of Roldan, who had promised him protection and assistance, and led on by the forlorn hope, in this distracted state of the Spanish forces, of relieving his paternal domains from the intolerable domi-

nation of usurping strangers. Holding secret communications with his tributary caciques, it was concerted that they should all rise simultaneously and massacre the soldiery, quartered in small parties in their villages; while he with a chosen force should surprise the fortress of Conception. The night of the full moon was fixed upon for the insurrection.

One of the principal caciques, however, not being a correct observer of the heavenly bodies, took up arms before the appointed night, and was repulsed by the soldiers quartered in his village. The alarm was given, and the Spaniards were all put on the alert. The cacique fled to Guarionex for protection, but the chieftain, enraged at his fatal blunder, put him to death upon the spot.

No sooner did the Adelantado hear of this fresh conspiracy, than he put himself on the march for the Vega with a strong body of men. Guarionex did not await his coming. He saw that every attempt was fruitless to shake off these strangers, who had settled like a curse upon his territories. He had found their very friendship withering and destructive, and he now dreaded their vengeance. Abandoning, therefore, his rightful domain, the once happy Vega, he fled with his family and a small

band of faithful followers to the mountains of Ciguay. This is a lofty chain, extending along the north side of the island, between the Vega and the sea. The inhabitants were the most robust and hardy tribe of the island, and far more formidable than the mild inhabitants of the plains. It was a part of this tribe which displayed hostility to the Spaniards in the course of the first voyage of Columbus, and in a skirmish with them in the Gulf of Samana the first drop of native blood had been shed in the New World. The reader may remember the frank and confiding conduct of these people the day after the skirmish, and the intrepid faith with which their cacique trusted himself on board of the caravel of the Admiral, and in the power of the Spaniards. It was to this same cacique, named Mayobanex, that the fugitive chieftain of the Vega now applied for refuge. He came to his residence at an Indian town near Cape Cabron, about forty leagues east of Isabella, and implored shelter for his wife and children and his handful of loyal followers. The noble-minded cacique of the mountains received him with open arms. He not only gave an asylum to his family, but engaged to stand by him in his distress, to defend his cause, and share his desperate fortunes. Men in civilized life

learn magnanimity from precept, but their most generous actions are often rivalled by the deeds of untutored savages, who act only from natural impulse.

Chapter VII.

CAMPAIGN OF THE ADELANTADO IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CIGUAY.

[1498.]

AIDED by his mountain ally, and by bands of hardy Ciguayans, Guarionex made several descents into the plain, cutting off straggling parties of the Spaniards, laying waste the villages of the natives which continued in allegiance to them, and destroying the fruits of the earth. The Adelantado put a speedy stop to these molestations; but he determined to root out so formidable an adversary from the neighborhood. Shrinking from no danger nor fatigue, and leaving nothing to be done by others which he could do himself, he set forth in the spring with a band of ninety men, a few cavalry, and a body of Indians to penetrate the Ciguay mountains.

After passing a steep defile, rendered almost

impracticable for troops by rugged rocks and exuberant vegetation, he descended into a beautiful valley or plain, extending along the coast and embraced by arms of the mountains which approached the sea. His advance into the country was watched by the keen eyes of Indian scouts, who lurked among rocks and thickets. As the Spaniards were seeking the ford of a river at the entrance of the plain, two of these spies darted from among the bushes on its bank. One flung himself headlong into the water, and swimming across the mouth of the river escaped; the other being taken gave information that six thousand Indians lay in ambush on the opposite shore, waiting to attack them as they crossed.

The Adelantado advanced with caution, and finding a shallow place, entered the river with his troops. They were scarcely midway in the stream when the savages, hideously painted, and looking more like fiends than men, burst from their concealment. The forest rang with their yells and howlings. They discharged a shower of arrows and lances, by which, notwithstanding the protection of their targets, many of the Spaniards were wounded. The Adelantado however forced his way across the river, and the Indians took to flight. Some were killed, but their swiftness of foot, their

knowledge of the forest, and their dexterity in winding through the most tangled thickets, enabled the greater number to elude the pursuit of the Spaniards, who were encumbered with armor, targets, cross-bows, and lances.

By the advice of one of his Indian guides, the Adelantado pressed forward along the valley to reach the residence of Mayobanex, at Cabron. In the way he had several skirmishes with the natives, who would suddenly rush forth with furious war-cries from ambuscades among the bushes, discharge their weapons, and take refuge again in the fastness of their rocks and forests, inaccessible to the Spaniards.

Having taken several prisoners, the Adelantado sent one accompanied by an Indian of a friendly tribe, as a messenger to Mayobanex, demanding the surrender of Guarionex; promising friendship and protection in case of compliance, but threatening, in case of refusal, to lay waste his territory with fire and sword. The Cacique listened attentively to the messenger.

"Tell the Spaniards," said he in reply, "that they are bad men, cruel and tyrannical; usurpers of the territories of others, and shedders of innocent blood. I desire not the friendship of such men. Guarionex is a good man, he is my friend, he is my guest, he

has fled to me for refuge, I have promised to protect him, and I will keep my word."

This magnanimous reply, or rather defiance, convinced the Adelantado that nothing was to be gained by friendly overtures. When severity was required he could be a stern soldier. He immediately ordered the village in which he had been quartered, and several others in the neighborhood, to be set on fire. He then sent further messengers to Mayobanex, warning him that unless he delivered up the fugitive Cacique, his whole dominion should be laid waste in like manner, and he would see nothing in every direction but the smoke and flames of burning villages. Alarmed at the impending destruction, the Ciguayans surrounded their chieftain with clamorous lamentations, cursing the day that Guarionex had taken refuge among them, and urging that he should be given up for the salvation of the country. The generous Cacique was inflexible. He reminded them of the many virtues of Guarionex, and the sacred claims he had on their hospitality, and declared he would abide all evils rather than it should ever be said that Mayobanex had betrayed his guest.

The people retired with sorrowful hearts, and the chieftain summoning Guarionex into

his presence, again pledged his word to protect him though it should cost him his dominions. He sent no reply to the Adelantado, and lest further messages might tempt the fidelity of his subjects, he placed men in ambush, with orders to slay any messengers who might approach. They had not lain in wait long before they beheld two men advancing through the forest, one of whom was a captive Ciguayan and the other an Indian ally of the Spaniards. They were both instantly slain. The Adelantado was following at no great distance, with only ten foot soldiers and four horsemen. When he found his messengers lying dead in the forest path, transfixed with arrows, he was greatly exasperated, and resolved to deal rigorously with this obstinate tribe. He advanced therefore with all his force to Cabron, where Mayobanex and his army were quartered. At his approach the inferior caciques and their adherents fled, overcome by terror of the Spaniards. Finding himself thus deserted, Mayobanex took refuge with his family in a secret part of the mountains. Several of the Ciguayans sought for Guarionex, to kill him or deliver him up as a propitiatory offering, but he fled to the heights, where he wandered about alone in the most savage and desolate places.

The density of the forests and the ruggedness of the mountains rendered this expedition excessively painful and laborious, and protracted it far beyond the time that the Adelantado had contemplated. His men suffered not merely from fatigue, but hunger. The natives had all fled to the mountains; their villages remained empty and desolate. All the provisions of the Spaniards consisted of cassava bread, and such roots and herbs as their Indian allies could gather for them, with now and then a few utias taken with the assistance of their dogs. They slept almost always on the ground, in the open air, under the trees, exposed to the heavy dew which falls in this climate. For three months they were thus ranging the mountains, until almost worn out with toil and hard fare. Many of them had farms in the neighborhood of Fort Conception, which required their attention; they, therefore, entreated permission, since the Indians were terrified and dispersed, to return to their abodes in the Vega.

The Adelantado granted many of them passports, and an allowance out of the scanty stock of bread which remained. Retaining only thirty men, he resolved with these to search every den and cavern of the mountains until he should find the two caciques. It was

difficult however to trace them in such a wilderness. There was no one to give a clue to their retreat, for the whole country was abandoned. There were the habitations of men, but not a human being to be seen; or if, by chance, they caught some wretched Indian stealing forth from the mountains in quest of food, he always professed utter ignorance of the hiding-place of the caciques.

It happened one day, however, that several Spaniards, while hunting utias, captured two of the followers of Mayobanex, who were on their way to a distant village in search of bread. They were taken to the Adelantado, who compelled them to betray the place of concealment of the chieftain, and to act as guides. Twelve Spaniards volunteered to go in quest of him. Stripping themselves naked, staining and painting their bodies so as to look like Indians, and covering their swords with palm-leaves, they were conducted by the guides to the retreat of the unfortunate Mayobanex. They came secretly upon him, found him surrounded by his wife and children and a few of his household, totally unsuspicious of danger. Drawing their swords, the Spaniards rushed upon them and made them all prisoners. When they were brought to the Adelantado he gave up all further search after

Guarionex, and returned to Fort Conception.

Among the prisoners thus taken was the sister of Mayobanex. She was the wife of another cacique of the mountains, whose territories had never yet been visited by the Spaniards; and she was reputed to be one of the most beautiful women of the island. Tenderly attached to her brother, she had abandoned the security of her own dominions, and had followed him among rocks and precipices, participating in all his hardships, and comforting him with a woman's sympathy and kindness. When her husband heard of her captivity, he hastened to the Adelantado, and offered to submit himself and all his possessions to his sway, if his wife might be restored to him. The Adelantado accepted his offer of allegiance, and released his wife and several of his subjects who had been captured. The cacique, faithful to his word, became a firm and valuable ally of the Spaniards, cultivating large tracts of land, and supplying them with great quantities of bread and other provisions.

Kindness appears never to have been lost upon the people of this island. When this act of clemency reached the Ciguayans they came in multitudes to the fortress, bringing presents of various kinds, promising allegi-

him to be detained a prisoner and hostage in the fortress. The Indian hostilities in this important part of the island being thus brought to a conclusion, and precautions taken to prevent their recurrence, Don Bartholomew returned to the city of San Domingo, where, shortly after his arrival, he had the happiness of receiving his brother the Admiral, after nearly two years and six months' absence.*

Such was the active, intrepid, and sagacious, but turbulent and disastrous administration of the Adelantado, in which we find evidences of the great capacity, the mental and bodily vigor of this self-formed, and almost self-taught man. He united, in a singular degree, the sailor, the soldier, and the legislator. Like his brother the Admiral, his mind and manners rose immediately to the level of his situation, showing no arrogance nor ostentation, and exercising the sway of a sudden and extraordinary power, with the sobriety and moderation of one who had been born to rule. He has been accused of severity in his government, but no instance appears of cruel or wanton abuse of authority. If he was stern towards the factious Spaniards,

* The particulars of this chapter are chiefly from P. Martyr, decad. i., lib. vi.; the manuscript history of Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 121; and Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 8, 9.

he was just; the disasters of his administration were not produced by his own rigor, but by the perverse passions of others, which called for its exercise; and the Admiral, who had more sauvity of manner and benevolence of heart, was not more fortunate in conciliating the good-will, and insuring the obedience of the colonists. The merits of Don Bartholomew do not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated by the world. His portrait has been suffered to remain too much in the shade; it is worthy of being brought into the light, as a companion to that of his illustrious brother. Less amiable and engaging, perhaps, in its lineaments, and less characterized by magnanimity, its traits are nevertheless bold, generous, and heroic, and stamped with iron firmness.

Book VII.

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Chapter I.

CONFUSION IN THE ISLAND—PROCEEDINGS OF THE REBELS AT XARAGUA.

[August 30, 1498.]

COLUMBUS arrived at San Domingo, wearied by a long and arduous voyage and worn down by infirmities; both mind and body craved repose, but from the time he first entered into a public life, he had been doomed never again to taste the sweets of tranquillity. The island of Hispaniola, the favorite child as it were of his hopes, was destined to involve him in perpetual troubles, to fetter his fortunes, impede his enterprises, and embitter the conclusion of his life. What a scene of poverty and suffering had this opulent and lovely island been rendered by the bad passions of a few despicable men! The wars with the natives and the seditions among the colonists had put a stop to the labors of the mines, and all hopes of

wealth were at an end. The horrors of famine had succeeded to those of war. The cultivation of the earth had been generally neglected; several of the provinces had been desolated during the late troubles; a great part of the Indians had fled to the mountains, and those who remained had lost all heart to labor, seeing the produce of their toils liable to be wrested from them by ruthless strangers. It is true the Vega was once more tranquil, but it was a desolate tranquillity. That beautiful region, which the Spaniards but four years before had found so populous and happy, seeming to inclose in its luxuriant bosom all the sweets of nature, and to exclude all the cares and sorrows of the world, was now a scene of wretchedness and repining. Many of those Indian towns, where the Spaniards had been detained by genial hospitality, and almost worshipped as beneficent deities, were now silent and deserted. Some of their late inhabitants were lurking among rocks and caverns; some were reduced to slavery; many had perished with hunger, and many had fallen by the sword. It seems almost incredible that so small a number of men, restrained too by well-meaning governors, could in so short a space of time have produced such wide-spreading miseries. But the principles of evil have a fatal activity.

With every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief.

The evil passions of the white men, which had inflicted such calamities upon this innocent people, had insured likewise a merited return of suffering to themselves. In no part was this more truly exemplified than among the inhabitants of Isabella, the most idle, factious, and dissolute of the island. The public works were unfinished; the gardens and fields they had begun to cultivate lay neglected; they had driven the natives from their vicinity by extortion and cruelty, and had rendered the country around them a solitary wilderness. Too idle to labor, and destitute of any resources with which to occupy their indolence, they quarrelled among themselves, mutinied against their rulers, and wasted their time in alternate riot and despondency. Many of the soldiery quartered about the island, had suffered from ill-health during the late troubles, being shut up in Indian villages, where they could take no exercise, and obliged to subsist on food to which they could not accustom themselves. Those actively employed, had been worn down by hard service, long marches, and scanty food. Many of them were broken in constitution,

and many had perished by disease. There was a universal desire to leave the island, and escape from miseries created by themselves. Yet this was the favored and fruitful land to which the eyes of philosophers and poets in Europe were fondly turned, as realizing the pictures of the golden age. So true it is that the fairest Elysium fancy ever devised, would be turned into a purgatory by the passions of bad men!

One of the first measures of Columbus on his arrival was to issue a proclamation approving of all the measures of the Adelantado, and denouncing Roldan and his associates. That turbulent man had taken possession of Xaragua, and been kindly received by the natives. He had permitted his followers to lead an idle and licentious life among its beautiful scenes, making the surrounding country and its inhabitants subservient to their pleasures and their passions. An event happened previous to their knowledge of the arrival of Columbus which threw supplies into their hands, and strengthened their power. As they were one day loitering on the seashore, they beheld three caravels at a distance, the sight of which, in this unfrequented part of the ocean, filled them with wonder and alarm. The ships approached the land, and came to anchor. The rebels ap-

prehended at first they were vessels despatched in pursuit of them. Roldan, however, who was sagacious as he was bold, surmised them to be ships which had wandered from their course, and been borne to the westward by the currents, and that they must be ignorant of the recent occurrences of the island. Enjoining secrecy on his men, he went on board, pretending to be stationed in that neighborhood for the purpose of keeping the natives in obedience and collecting tribute. His conjectures as to the vessels were correct. They were in fact the three caravels detached by Columbus from his squadron at the Canary Islands, to bring supplies to the colonies. The captains, ignorant of the strength of the currents which set through the Caribbean Sea, had been carried west far beyond their reckoning, until they had wandered to the coast of Xaragua.

Roldan kept his secret closely for three days. Being considered a man in important trust and authority, the captains did not hesitate to grant all his requests for supplies. He procured swords, lances, cross-bows, and various military stores; while his men, dispersed through the three vessels, were busy among the crews, secretly making partisans, representing the hard life of the colonists at San Domingo, and the ease and revelry in which they passed their

them convicted culprits, accustomed to detest order, and to set law at defiance. It was equally in vain that he appealed to Roldan, and reminded him of his professions of loyalty to the government. The latter replied that he had no means of enforcing obedience; his was a mere "Monastery of Observation," where every one was at liberty to adopt the habit of the order. Such was the first of a long train of evils, which sprang from this most ill-judged expedient of peopling a colony with criminals, and thus mingling vice and villany with the fountain-head of its population.

Juan Antonio, grieved and disconcerted, returned on board with the few who remained faithful. Fearing further desertions, the two captains immediately put to sea, leaving Carvajal on shore, to prosecute his attempts at reforming the rebels. It was not without great difficulty and delay that the vessels reached San Domingo; the ship of Carvajal having struck on a sand-bank, and sustained great injury. By the time of their arrival, the greater part of the provisions with which they had been freighted was either exhausted or damaged. Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal arrived shortly afterwards by land, having been escorted to within six leagues of the place by several of the insurgents, to protect him from

the Indians. He failed in his attempts to persuade the band to immediate submission; but Roldan had promised that the moment he heard of the arrival of Columbus, he would repair to the neighborhood of San Domingo, to be at hand to state his grievances, and the reasons of his past conduct, and to enter into a negotiation for the adjustment of all differences. Carvajal brought a letter from him to the Admiral to the same purport, and expressed a confident opinion, from all that he observed of the rebels, that they might easily be brought back to their allegiance by an assurance of amnesty.*

* Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 149, 150. Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap 12. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 77.

Chapter 11.

NEGOTIATION OF THE ADMIRAL WITH THE REBELS —DEPARTURE OF SHIPS FOR SPAIN.

[1498.]

NOTWITHSTANDING the favorable representations of Carvajal, Columbus was greatly troubled by the late event at Xaragua. He saw that the insolence of the rebels, and their confidence in their strength, must be greatly increased by the accession of such a large number of well-armed and desperate confederates. The proposition of Roldan to approach to the neighborhood of San Domingo, startled him. He doubted the sincerity of his professions, and apprehended great evils and dangers from so artful, daring, and turbulent a leader, with a rash and devoted crew at his command. The example of this lawless horde, roving at large about the island, and living in loose revel and open profligacy, could not but have a dangerous effect

upon the colonists newly arrived; and when they were close at hand, to carry on secret intrigues, and to hold out a camp of refuge to all malcontents, the loyalty of the whole colony might be sapped and undermined.

Some measures were immediately necessary to fortify the fidelity of the people against such seductions. He was aware of a vehement desire among many to return to Spain; and an assertion industriously propagated by the seditious, that he and his brothers wished to detain the colonists on the island through motives of self-interest. On the 12th of September therefore he issued a proclamation, offering free passage and provisions for the voyage to all who wished to return to Spain, in five vessels, nearly ready to put to sea. He hoped by this means to relieve the colony from the idle and disaffected; to weaken the party of Roldan, and to retain none about him but such as were sound-hearted and well-disposed.

He wrote at the same time to Miguel Ballester, the stanch and well-tried veteran who commanded the fortress of Conception, advising him to be upon his guard, as the rebels were coming into his neighborhood. He empowered him also to have an interview with Roldan; to offer him pardon and oblivion of the past, on condition of his immediate return

to duty; and to invite him to repair to San Domingo to have an interview with the Admiral, under a solemn, and if required, a written assurance from the latter, of personal safety. Columbus was sincere in his intentions. He was of a benevolent and placable disposition, and singularly free from all vindictive feeling towards the many worthless and wicked men who heaped sorrow on his head.

Ballester had scarcely received this letter when the rebels began to arrive at the village of Bonao. This was situated in a beautiful valley, or *vega*, bearing the same name; about ten leagues from Fort Conception, and about twenty from San Domingo, in a well-peopled and abundant country. Here Pedro Requelme, one of the ringleaders of the sedition, had large possessions, and his residence became the headquarters of the rebels. Adrian de Moxica, a man of turbulent and mischievous character, brought his detachment of dissolute ruffians to his place of rendezvous. Roldan and others of the conspirators drew together there by different routes.

No sooner did the veteran Miguel Ballester hear of the arrival of Roldan, than he set forth to meet him. Ballester was a venerable man, gray-headed, and of a soldier-like demeanor.

Loyal, frank, and virtuous, of a serious disposition, and great simplicity of heart, he was well chosen as a mediator with rash and profligate men; being calculated to calm their passions by his sobriety; to disarm their petulance by his age; to win their confidence by his artless probity; and to awe their licentiousness by his spotless virtue.*

Ballester found Roldan in company with Pedro Requelme, Pedro de Gamez, and Adrian de Moxica, three of his principal confederates. Flushed with a confidence of his present strength, Roldan treated the proffered pardon with contempt, declaring that he did not come here to treat of peace, but to demand the release of certain Indians captured unjustifiably, and about to be shipped to Spain as slaves, notwithstanding that he, in his capacity of alcalde mayor, had pledged his word for their protection. He declared that, until these Indians were given up, he would listen to no terms of compact; throwing out an insolent intimation at the same time, that he held the Admiral and his fortunes in his hand, to make and mar them as he pleased.

The Indians here alluded to were certain subjects of Guarionex, who had been incited by Roldan to resist the exaction of tribute,

* Las Casas, *Hist Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 153.

and who, under the sanction of his supposed authority, had engaged in the insurrections of the Vega. Roldan knew that the enslavement of the Indians was an unpopular feature in the government of the island, especially with the Queen; and the artful character of this man is evinced in his giving his opposition to Columbus the appearance of a vindication of the rights of the suffering islanders. Other demands were made of a highly insolent nature, and the rebels declared that, in all further negotiations, they would treat with no other intermediate agent than Cavajal, having had proofs of his fairness and impartiality in the course of their late communications with him at Xaragua.

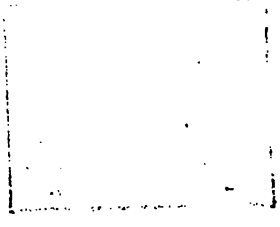
This arrogant reply to his proffer of pardon was totally different from what the Admiral had been led to expect, and placed him in an embarrassing situation. He seemed surrounded by treachery and falsehood. He knew that Roldan had friends and secret partisans even among those who professed to remain faithful; and he knew not how far the ramifications of the conspiracy might extend. A circumstance soon occurred to show the justice of his apprehensions. He ordered the men of San Domingo to appear under arms that he might ascertain the force with which he could take

the field in case of necessity. A report was immediately circulated that they were to be led to Bonao against the rebels. Not above seventy men appeared under arms, and of these not forty were to be relied upon. One affected to be lame, another ill; some had relations, and others had friends among the followers of Roldan; almost all were disaffected to the service.*

Columbus saw that a resort to arms would betray his own weakness and the power of the rebels, and completely prostrate the dignity and authority of government. It was necessary to temporize, therefore, however humiliating such conduct might be deemed. He had detained the five ships for eighteen days in port, hoping in some way to have put an end to this rebellion, so as to send home favorable accounts of the island to the sovereigns. The provisions of the ships, however, were wasting. The Indian prisoners on board were suffering and perishing; several of them threw themselves overboard, or were suffocated with heat in the holds of the vessels. He was anxious, also, that as many of the discontented colonists as possible should make sail for Spain before any commotion should take place.

On the 18th of October therefore the ships

* *Hist del Almirante*, cap. 78.



alluded to his chastisement of the contemptible Ximeno Breviesca, the insolent minion of Fonseca, and entreated that neither that nor any other circumstance might be allowed to prejudice him in the royal favor, through the misrepresentations of designing men. He assured them that the natural resources of the island required nothing but good management to supply all the wants of the colonists; but that the latter were indolent and profligate. He proposed to send home, by every ship, as in the present instance, a number of the discontented and worthless, to be replaced by sober and industrious men. He begged also that ecclesiastics might be sent out for the instruction and conversion of the Indians; and, what was equally necessary, for the reformation of the dissolute Spaniards. He required also a man learned in the law, to officiate as judge over the island, together with several officers of the royal revenue. Nothing could surpass the soundness and policy of these suggestions, but unfortunately one clause marred the moral beauty of this excellent letter. He requested that for two years longer the Spaniards might be permitted to employ the Indians as slaves, only making use of such, however, as were captured in wars and insurrections. Columbus had the usage

of the age in excuse for this suggestion, but it is at variance with his usual benignity of feeling and his paternal conduct towards these unfortunate people.

At the same time he wrote another letter, giving an account of his recent voyage, accompanied by a chart and by specimens of the gold, and particularly of the pearls found in the gulf of Paria. He called especial attention to the latter, as being the first specimens of pearls found in the New World. It was in this letter that he described the newly discovered continent in such enthusiastic terms, as the most favored part of the East, the source of inexhaustible treasures, the supposed seat of the terrestrial Paradise; and he promised to prosecute the discovery of its glorious realms with the three remaining ships, as soon as the affairs of the island should permit.

By this opportunity, Roldan and his friends likewise sent letters to Spain, endeavoring to justify their rebellion, by charging Columbus and his brothers with oppression and injustice, and painting their whole conduct in the blackest colors. It would naturally be supposed that the representations of such men would have little weight in the balance, against the tried merits and exalted services of Columbus; but they had numerous friends and relatives in Spain,

they had the popular prejudice on their side, and there were designing persons in the confidence of the sovereigns ready to advocate their cause. Columbus, to use his own simple but affecting words, was "absent, envied, and a stranger."*

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 157.

Chapter III.

NEGOTIATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE REBELS.

[1498.]

THE ships being despatched, Columbus resumed his negotiation with the rebels —determined at any sacrifice to put an end to a sedition which distracted the island and interrupted all his plans of discovery. His three remaining ships lay idle in the harbor, though a region of apparently boundless wealth was to be explored. He had intended to send his brother on the discovery, but the active and military spirit of the Adelantado rendered his presence indispensable, in case the rebels should come to violence. Such were the difficulties encountered at every step of his generous and magnanimous enterprises; impeded at one time by the insidious intrigues of crafty men in place, and checked at another by the insolent turbulence of a handful of ruffians.

In his consultations with the most important persons about him, Columbus found that much of the popular discontent was attributed to the strict rule of his brother, who was accused of dealing out justice with a rigorous hand. Las Casas however, who saw the whole testimony collected from various sources with respect to the conduct of the Adelantado, acquits him of all charges of the kind, and affirms that, with respect to Roldan in particular, he had exerted great forbearance. Be this as it may, Columbus now, by the advice of his counsellors, resolved to try the alternative of extreme lenity. He wrote a letter to Roldan, dated the 20th of October, couched in the most conciliating terms, calling to mind past kindnesses, and expressing deep concern for the feud existing between him and the Adelantado. He entreated him, for the common good, and for the sake of his own reputation, which stood well with the sovereigns, not to persist in his present insubordination, and repeated the assurance that he and his companions might come to him, under the faith of his word for the inviolability of their persons.

There was a difficulty as to who should be the bearer of this letter. The rebels had declared that they would receive no one as mediator but Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal.

Strong doubts however existed in the minds of those about Columbus as to the integrity of that officer. They observed that he had suffered Roldan to remain two days on board of his caravel at Xaragua, had furnished him with weapons and stores, had neglected to detain him on board, when he knew him to be a rebel, had not exerted himself to retake the deserters, had been escorted on his way to San Domingo by the rebels, and had sent refreshments to them at Bonao. It was alleged, moreover, that he had given himself out as a colleague of Columbus, appointed by government to have a watch and control over his conduct. It was suggested that in advising the rebels to approach San Domingo he had intended, in case the Admiral did not arrive, to unite his pretended authority as colleague to that of Roldan as chief judge, and to seize upon the reins of government. Finally, the desire of the rebels to have him sent to them as an agent was cited as proof that he was to join them as a leader, and that the standard of rebellion was to be hoisted at Bonao.* These circumstances for some time perplexed Columbus; but he reflected that Carvajal, as far as he had observed his conduct, had behaved like a man of integrity—most of the circumstances

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 78.

alleged against him admitted of a construction in his favor, the rest were mere rumors, and he had unfortunately experienced in his own case how easily the fairest actions and the fairest characters may be falsified by rumor. He discarded therefore all suspicion, and determined to confide implicitly in Carvajal; nor had he ever any reason to repent of his confidence.

The Admiral had scarcely despatched this letter, when he received one from the leaders of the rebels, written several days previously. In this they not merely vindicated themselves from the charge of rebellion, but claimed great merit, as having persuaded their followers from a resolution to kill the Adelantado, in revenge of his oppressions, prevailing upon them to wait patiently for redress from the Admiral. A month had elapsed since his arrival, during which they had waited anxiously for his orders, but he had manifested nothing but irritation against them. Considerations of honor and safety therefore obliged them to withdraw from his service, and they accordingly demanded their discharge. This letter was dated from Bonao, the 17th of October, and signed by Francisco Roldan, Adrian de Moxica, Pedro de Gamez, and Diego de Escobar.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 79. Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 13.

In the meantime Carvajal arrived at Bonao, accompanied by Miguel Ballester. They found the rebels full of arrogance and presumption. The conciliating letter of the Admiral, however, enforced by the earnest persuasions of Carvajal and the admonitions of the veteran Ballester, had a favorable effect on several of the leaders, who had more intellect than their brutal followers. Roldan, Gamez, Escobar, and two or three others, actually mounted their horses to repair to the Admiral, but were retained by the clamorous opposition of their men—too infatuated with their idle, licentious mode of life, to relish the idea of a return to labor and discipline. These insisted that it was a matter which concerned them all; whatever arrangement was to be made therefore should be made in public in writing and subject to their approbation or dissent. A day or two elapsed before this clamor could be appeased. Roldan then wrote to the Admiral that his followers objected to his coming unless a written assurance or passport were sent, protecting the person of himself and such as should accompany him. Miguel Ballester wrote at the same time to the Admiral, urging him to agree to whatever terms the rebels might demand. He represented their forces as continually augmenting, the soldiers of his

garrison daily deserting to them. Unless therefore some compromise were speedily effected, and the rebels shipped off to Spain, he feared that not merely the authority but even the person of the Admiral would be in danger; for though the *hidalgos* and the officers and servants immediately about him would doubtless die in his service, the common people were but little to be depended upon.*

Columbus felt the increasing urgency of the case, and sent the required passport. Roldan came to San Domingo, but from his conduct it appeared as if his object was to make partisans and gain deserters, rather than to effect a reconciliation. He had several conversations with the Admiral and several letters passed between them. He made many complaints and numerous demands. Columbus made large concessions, but some of the pretensions were too arrogant to be admitted.† Nothing definite was arranged. Roldan departed under the pretext of conferring with his people, promising to send his terms in writing. The Admiral sent his *mayordomo*, Diego de Salamanca, to treat in his behalf.‡

On the 6th of November Roldan wrote a

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.* lib., i., cap. 153.

† *Ibid.*, lib. i., cap 158.

‡ *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 79.

letter from Bonao containing his terms and requesting that a reply might be sent to him to Conception, as scarcity of provisions obliged him to leave Bonao. He added that he should wait for a reply until the following Monday (the 11th). There was an insolent menace implied in this note, accompanied as it was by insolent demands. The Admiral found it impossible to comply with the latter; but to manifest his lenient disposition and to take from the rebels all plea of rigor, he had a proclamation affixed for thirty days at the gate of the fortress, promising full indulgence and complete oblivion of the past to Roldan and his followers on condition of their presenting themselves before him and returning to their allegiance to the Crown within a month, together with free conveyance for all such as wished to return to Spain; but threatening to execute rigorous justice upon those who should not appear within a limited time. A copy of this paper he sent to Roldan by Carvajal, with a letter stating the impossibility of compliance with his terms, but offering to agree to any compact drawn up with the approbation of Carvajal and Salamanca.

When Carvajal arrived he found the veteran Ballester actually besieged in his fortress of Conception by Roldan, under pretext of claim-

ing, in his official character of alcalde mayor, a culprit who had taken refuge there from justice. He had cut off the supply of water from the fort, by way of distressing it into a surrender. When Carvajal posted up the proclamation of the Admiral on the gate of the fortress, the rebels scoffed at the proffered amnesty, saying that in a little while they would oblige the Admiral to ask the same at their hands. The earnest intercessions of Carvajal, however, brought the leaders at length to reflection, and through his mediation articles of capitulation were drawn up. By these it was agreed that Roldan and his followers should embark for Spain from the port of Xaragua in two ships, to be fitted out and victualled within fifty days. That they should each receive from the Admiral a certificate of good conduct, and an order for the amount of their pay up to the actual date. That slaves should be given to them as had been given to others in consideration of services performed; and as several of their company had wives, natives of the island, who were pregnant or had lately been delivered, they might take them with them, if willing to go in place of the slaves. That satisfaction should be made for property of some of the company which had been sequestrated, and for live stock which had belonged

to Francisco Roldan. There were other conditions providing for the security of their persons, and it was stipulated that if no reply were received to these terms within eight days the whole should be void.*

This agreement was signed by Roldan and his companions at Fort Conception, on the 16th day of November, and by the Admiral at San Domingo on the 21st. At the same time he proclaimed a further act of grace, permitting such as chose to remain in the island, either to come to San Domingo and enter into the royal service or to hold lands in any part of the island. They preferred however to follow the fortunes of Roldan, who departed with his band for Xaragua, to await the arrival of the ships, accompanied by Miguel Ballester, sent by the Admiral to superintend the preparations for their embarkation.

Columbus was deeply grieved to have his projected enterprise to Terra Firma impeded by such contemptible obstacles, and the ships which should have borne his brother to explore that newly found continent devoted to the use of this turbulent and worthless rabble. He consoled himself however with the reflection that all the mischief which had so long been lurking in the island would thus be at once

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 80.

shipped off, and thenceforth everything restored to order and tranquillity. He ordered every exertion to be made therefore to get the ships in readiness to be sent round to Xaragua; but the scarcity of sea stores, and the difficulty of completing the arrangements for such a voyage in the disordered state of the colony, delayed their departure far beyond the stipulated time. Feeling that he had been compelled to a kind of deception towards the sovereigns, in the certificate of good conduct given to Roldan and his followers, he wrote a letter to them, stating the circumstances under which that certificate had been in a manner wrung from him, to save the island from utter confusion and ruin. He represented the real character and conduct of those men—how they had rebelled against his authority, prevented the Indians from paying tribute, pillaged the island, possessed themselves of large quantities of gold, and carried off the daughters of several of the caciques. He advised therefore that they should be seized, and their slaves and treasure taken from them until their conduct could be properly investigated. This letter he entrusted to a confidential person, who was to go in one of the ships.*

The rebels having left the neighborhood, and

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

the affairs of San Domingo being in a state of security, Columbus put his brother Don Diego in temporary command, and departed with the Adelantado on a tour of several months, to visit the various stations and restore the island to order.

The two caravels destined for the use of the rebels sailed from San Domingo for Xaragua about the end of February, but encountering a violent storm, were obliged to put into one of the harbors of the island, where they were detained until the end of March. One was so disabled as to be compelled to return to San Domingo. Another vessel was despatched to supply its place, in which the indefatigable Carvajal set sail, to expedite the embarkation of the rebels. He was eleven days in making the voyage, and found the other caravel at Xaragua.

The followers of Roldan had in the meantime changed their minds, and now refused to embark. As usual, they threw all the blame on Columbus, affirming that he had purposely delayed the ships far beyond the stipulated time; that he had sent them in a state not seaworthy, and short of provisions, with many other charges, artfully founded on circumstances over which they knew he could have no control. Carvajal made a formal

protest before a notary who had accompanied him, and finding that the ships were suffering great injury from the *teredo*, or worm, and their provisions failing, he sent them back to San Domingo, and set out on his return by land. Roldan accompanied him a little distance on horseback, evidently disturbed in mind. He feared to return to Spain, yet was shrewd enough to know the insecurity of his present situation at the head of a band of dissolute men, acting in defiance of authority. What tie had he upon their fidelity stronger than the sacred obligations which they had violated? After riding thoughtfully for some distance, he paused, and requested some private conversation with Carvajal before they parted. They alighted under the shade of a tree. Here Roldan made further professions of the loyalty of his intentions, and finally declared, that if the Admiral would once more send him a written security for his person, with the guaranty also of the principal persons about him, he would come to treat with him, and trusted that the whole matter would be arranged on terms satisfactory to both parties. This offer however, he added, must be kept secret from his followers.

Carvajal, overjoyed at this prospect of a final arrangement, lost no time in conveying the

proposition of Roldan to the Admiral. The latter immediately forwarded the required passport or security, sealed with the royal seal, accompanied by a letter written in amicable terms, exhorting his quiet obedience to the authority of the sovereigns. Several of the principal persons also, who were with the Admiral, wrote at his request a letter of security to Roldan, pledging themselves for the safety of himself and his followers during the negotiation, provided they did nothing hostile to the royal authority or its representative.

While Columbus was thus with unwearied assiduity and loyal zeal endeavoring to bring the island back to its obedience, he received a reply from Spain to the earnest representations made by him in the preceding autumn of the distracted state of the colony and the outrages of these lawless men, and his prayers for royal countenance and support. The letter was written by his invidious enemy, the Bishop Fonseca, Superintendent of Indian Affairs. It acknowledged the receipt of his statement of the alleged insurrection of Roldan, but observed that this matter must be suffered to remain in suspense, as the sovereigns would investigate and remedy it presently.*

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

This cold reply had a disheartening effect upon Columbus. He saw that his complaints had little weight with the government; he feared that his enemies were prejudicing him with the sovereigns; and he anticipated redoubled insolence on the part of the rebels, when they should discover how little influence he possessed in Spain. Full of zeal however for the success of his undertaking, and of fidelity to the interests of the sovereigns, he resolved to spare no personal sacrifice of comfort or dignity in appeasing the troubles of the island. Eager to expedite the negotiation with Roldan therefore he sailed in the latter part of August with two caravels to the port of Azua, west of San Domingo, and much nearer to Xaragua. He was accompanied by several of the most important personages of the colony. Roldan repaired thither likewise with the turbulent Adrian de Moxica and a number of his band. The concessions already obtained had increased his presumption; and he had doubtless received intelligence of the cold manner in which the complaints of the Admiral had been received in Spain. He conducted himself more like a conqueror exacting triumphant terms, than a delinquent seeking to procure pardon by atonement. He came on board of the caravel, and with his usual

effrontery, propounded the preliminaries upon which he and his companions were disposed to negotiate.

First, that he should be permitted to send several of his company, to the number of fifteen, to Spain in the vessels which were at San Domingo. Secondly, that those who remained should have lands granted to them in place of royal pay. Thirdly, that it should be proclaimed that everything charged against him and his party had been grounded upon false testimony and the machinations of persons disaffected to the royal service. Fourthly, that he should be reinstated in his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge.*

These were hard and insolent conditions to commence with, but they were granted. Roldan then went on shore and communicated them to his companions. At the end of two days the insurgents sent their capitulations, drawn up in form and couched in arrogant language, including all the stipulations granted at Fort Conception with those recently demanded by Roldan, and concluding with one more insolent than all the rest, namely, that if the Admiral should fail in the fulfilment of any of these articles, they should have a right to assemble together, and compel his perform-

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

ance of them by force or by any other means they might think proper.* The conspirators thus sought not merely exculpation of the past but a pretext for future rebellion.

The mind grows wearied and impatient with recording, and the heart of the generous reader must burn with indignation at perusing, this protracted and ineffectual struggle of a man of the exalted merits and matchless services of Columbus in the toils of such miscreants. Surrounded by doubt and danger, a foreigner among a jealous people, an unpopular commander in a mutinous island, distrusted and slighted by the government he was seeking to serve, and creating suspicion by his very services, he knew not where to look for faithful advice, efficient aid, or candid judgment. The very ground on which he stood seemed to give way under him, for he was told of seditious symptoms among his own people. Seeing the impunity with which the rebels rioted in the possession of one of the finest parts of the island, they began to talk among themselves of following their example, of abandoning the standard of the Admiral, and seizing upon the province of Higuey at the eastern extremity of the island, which was said to contain valuable mines of gold.

* Herrera, *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 38.

Thus critically situated, disregarding every consideration of personal pride and dignity, and determined, at any individual sacrifice, to secure the interests of an ungrateful sovereign, Columbus forced himself to sign this most humiliating capitulation. He trusted that afterwards, when he could gain quiet access to the royal ear, he should be able to convince the King and Queen that it had been compulsory and forced from him by the extraordinary difficulties in which he had been placed and the imminent perils of the colony. Before signing it, however, he inserted a stipulation, that the commands of the sovereigns, of himself, and of the justices appointed by him should be punctually obeyed.*

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

Chapter IV.

GRANTS MADE TO ROLDAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS—DEPARTURE OF SEVERAL OF THE REBELS FOR SPAIN.

[1499.]

WHEN Roldan resumed his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge, he displayed all the arrogance to be expected from one who had intruded himself into power by profligate means. At the city of San Domingo he was always surrounded by his faction; communed only with the dissolute and disaffected; and, having all the turbulent and desperate men of the community at his beck, was enabled to intimidate the quiet and loyal by his frowns. He bore an impudent front against the authority even of Columbus himself, discharging from office one Rodrigo Perez, a lieutenant of the Admiral, declaring that none but such as he appointed should bear a staff of office in the

island.* Columbus had a difficult and painful task in bearing with the insolence of this man, and of the shameless rabble which had returned, under his auspices, to the settlements. He tacitly permitted many abuses; endeavoring by mildness and indulgence to allay the jealousies and prejudices awakened against him, and by various concessions to lure the factious to the performance of their duty. To such of the colonists generally as preferred to remain in the island, he offered a choice of either royal pay or portions of lands, with a number of Indians, some free, others as slaves, to assist in the cultivation. The latter was generally preferred; and grants were made out, in which he endeavored, as much as possible, to combine the benefit of the individual with the interests of the colony.

Roldan presented a memorial signed by upwards of one hundred of his late followers, demanding grants of lands and licenses to settle, and choosing Xaragua for their place of abode. The Admiral feared to trust such a numerous body of factious partisans in so remote a province; he contrived, therefore, to distribute them in various parts of the island, some at Bonao, where their settlement gave origin to the town of that name; others on

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

the banks of the Rio Verde, or Green River in the Vega; others about six leagues thence, at St. Jago. He assigned to them liberal portions of land, and numerous Indian slaves, taken in the wars. He made an arrangement, also, by which the caciques in their vicinity, instead of paying tribute should furnish parties of their subjects, free Indians, to assist the colonists in the cultivation of their lands—a kind of feudal service, which was the origin of the *repartimientos*, or distributions of free Indians among the colonists, afterwards generally adopted and shamefully abused throughout the Spanish colonies; a source of intolerable hardships and oppressions to the unhappy natives, and which greatly contributed to exterminate them from the island of Hispaniola.* Columbus considered the island in the light of a conquered country, and arrogated to himself all the rights of a conqueror, in the name of the sovereigns for whom he fought. Of course all his companions in the enterprise were entitled to take part in the acquired territory, and to establish themselves there as feudal lords, reducing the natives to the condition of villains or vassals.† This was an arrangement widely different from his original

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.
† Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi., § 50.

intention of treating the natives with kindness, as peaceful subjects of the Crown. But all his plans had been subverted, and his present measures forced upon him by the exigency of the times and the violence of lawless men. He appointed a captain with an armed band, as a kind of police, with orders to range the provinces, oblige the Indians to pay their tributes, watch over the conduct of the colonists, and check the least appearance of mutiny or insurrection.*

Having sought and obtained such ample provisions for his followers, Roldan was not more modest in making demands for himself. He claimed certain lands in the vicinity of Isabella, as having belonged to him before his rebellion; also a royal farm, called La Esperanza, situated on the Vega, and devoted to the rearing of poultry. These the Admiral granted him, with permission to employ in the cultivation of the farm the subjects of the cacique whose ears had been cut off by Alonso de Ojeda in his first military expedition into the Vega. Roldan received also grants of land in Xaragua, and a variety of live stock from the cattle and other animals belonging to the Crown. These grants were made to him provisionally, until the pleasure of the sovereigns

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 84.

should be known*; for Columbus yet trusted, that when they should understand the manner in which these concessions had been extorted from him, the ringleaders of the rebels would not merely be stripped of their ill-gotten possessions, but receive well-merited punishment.

Roldan having now enriched himself beyond his hopes, requested permission of Columbus to visit his lands. This was granted with great reluctance. He immediately departed for the Vega, and stopping at Bonao, his late headquarters, made Pedro Requelme, one of his most active confederates, alcalde or judge of the place, with the power of arresting all delinquents and sending them prisoners to the fortress of Conception, where he reserved to himself the right of sentencing them. This was an assumption of powers not vested in his office, and gave great offence to Columbus. Other circumstances created apprehensions of further troubles from the late insurgents. Pedro Requelme, under pretext of erecting farming buildings for his cattle, began to construct a strong edifice on a hill, capable of being converted into a formidable fortress. This, it was whispered, was done in concert with Roldan, by way of securing a stronghold in case of need. Being in the neighborhood of the

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

Vega, where so many of their late partisans were settled, it would form a dangerous rallying-place for any new sedition. The designs of Requelme were suspected and his proceedings opposed by Pedro de Arana, a loyal and honorable man, who was on the spot. Representations were made by both parties to the Admiral, who prohibited Requelme from proceeding with the construction of his edifice.*

Columbus had prepared to return with his brother Don Bartholomew to Spain, where he felt that his presence was of the utmost importance to place the late events of the island in a proper light—having found that his letters of explanation were liable to be counteracted by the misrepresentations of malevolent enemies. The island, however, was still in a feverish state. He was not well assured of the fidelity of the late rebels, though so dearly purchased. There was a rumor of a threatened descent into the Vega by the mountain tribes of Ciguay, to attempt the rescue of their captive Cacique Mayobanex, still detained a prisoner in the fortress of Conception. Tidings were brought about the same time from the western parts of the island that four strange ships had arrived at the coast, under suspicious appear-

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 83, 84.

ances. These circumstances obliged him to postpone his departure, and held him involved in the affairs of this favorite but fatal island.

The two caravels were despatched for Spain in the beginning of October, taking such of the colonists as chose to return, and among them a number of Roldan's partisans. Some of these took with them slaves, others carried away the daughters of caciques whom they had beguiled from their families and homes. At these iniquities, no less than at many others which equally grieved his spirit, the Admiral was obliged to connive. He was conscious at the same time that he was sending home a reinforcement of enemies and false witnesses, to defame his character and traduce his conduct, but he had no alternative. To counteract as much as possible their misrepresentations, he sent by the same caravel the loyal and upright veteran Miguel Ballester, together with Garcia de Barrantes, empowered to attend to his affairs at court, and furnished with the depositions taken relative to the conduct of Roldan and his accomplices.

In his letters to the sovereigns he entreated them to inquire into the truth of the late transactions. He stated his opinion that his capitulations with the rebels were null and void, for various reasons, *viz.*,—they had been ex-

torted from him by violence, and at sea where he did not exercise the office of viceroy. There had been two trials relative to the insurrection, and the insurgents having been condemned as traitors, it was not in the power of the Admiral to absolve them from their criminality. The capitulations treated of matters touching the royal revenue, over which he had no control, without the intervention of the proper officers. Lastly, Francisco Roldan and his companions on leaving Spain had taken an oath to be faithful to the sovereigns, and to the Admiral in their name, which oath they had violated. For these and similar reasons, some just, others rather sophistical, he urged the sovereigns not to consider themselves bound to ratify the compulsory terms ceded to these profligate men, but to inquire into their offences, and treat them accordingly.*

He repeated the request made in a former letter that a learned judge might be sent out to administer the laws in the island, since he himself had been charged with rigor, although conscious of having always observed a guarded clemency. He requested also that discreet persons should be sent out to form a council and others for certain fiscal employments, entreating however that their powers should

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 16.

be so limited and defined as not to interfere with his dignity and privileges. He bore strongly on this point, as his prerogatives on former occasions had been grievously invaded. It appeared to him, he said, that princes ought to show much confidence in their governors; for without the royal favor to give them strength and consequence, everything went to ruin under their command—a sound maxim, forced from the Admiral by his recent experience, in which much of his own perplexities and the triumph of the rebels had been caused by the distrust of the Crown and its inattention to his remonstrances.

Finding age and infirmity creeping upon him, and his health much impaired by his last voyage, he began to think of his son Diego as an active coadjutor; who, being destined as his successor, might gain experience under his eye for the future discharge of his high duties. Diego, though still serving as a page at the court was grown to man's estate, and capable of entering into the important concerns of life. Columbus entreated therefore that he might be sent out to assist him, as he felt himself infirm in health and broken in constitution and less capable of exertion than formerly.*

*Herrera, decad. i., lib. iii., cap. 15.

Chapter V.

ARRIVAL OF OJEDA WITH A SQUADRON AT THE WESTERN PART OF THE ISLAND—ROLDAN SENT TO MEET HIM.

[1499.]

AMONG the causes which induced Columbus to postpone his departure for Spain, has been mentioned the arrival of four ships at the western part of the island. These had anchored on the 5th of September in a harbor a little below Jacquemel, apparently with the design of cutting dyewoods, which abound in that neighborhood, and of carrying off the natives for slaves. Further reports informed him that they were commanded by Alonso de Ojeda, the same hot-headed and bold-hearted cavalier who had distinguished himself on various occasions in the previous voyages of discovery, and particularly in the capture of the Cacique Caonabo. Knowing the daring and adventurous spirit of this man, Columbus felt much disturbed at his visiting

the island in this clandestine manner, on what appeared to be little better than a freebooting expedition. To call him to account, and oppose his aggressions, required an agent of spirit and address. No one seemed better fitted for the purpose than Roldan. He was as daring as Ojeda, and of a more crafty character. An expedition of the kind would occupy the attention of himself and his partisans, and divert them from any schemes of mischief. The large concessions recently made to them would, he trusted, secure their present fidelity, rendering it more profitable for them to be loyal than rebellious.

Roldan readily undertook the enterprise. He had nothing further to gain by sedition, and was anxious to secure his ill-gotten possessions, and atone for past offences by public services. He was vain as well as active, and took a pride in acquitting himself well in an expedition which called for both courage and shrewdness. Departing from San Domingo with two caravels, he arrived on the 29th of September within two leagues of the harbor where the ships of Ojeda were anchored. Here he landed with five-and-twenty resolute followers, well armed, and accustomed to range the forests. He sent five scouts to reconnoitre. They brought word that Ojeda was several

leagues distant from his ships, with only fifteen men, employed in making cassava bread in an Indian village. Roldan threw himself between them and the ships, thinking to take them by surprise. They were apprised however of his approach by the Indians, with whom the very name of Roldan inspired terror, from his late excesses in Xaragua. Ojeda saw his danger; he supposed Roldan had been sent in pursuit of him, and he found himself cut off from his ships. With his usual intrepidity he immediately presented himself before Roldan, attended merely by half a dozen followers. Roldan craftily began by conversing on general topics. He then inquired into his motives for landing on the island, particularly on that remote and lonely part, without first reporting his arrival to the Admiral. Ojeda replied that he had been on a voyage of discovery, and had put in there in distress, to repair his ships and procure provisions. Roldan then demanded, in the name of the government, a sight of the license under which he sailed. Ojeda, who knew the resolute character of the man he had to deal with, restrained his natural impetuosity, and replied that his papers were on board of his ship. He declared his intention on departing thence, to go to San Domingo, and pay his homage to the Admiral, having many

things to tell him which were for his private ear alone. He intimated to Roldan that the Admiral was in complete disgrace at court; that there was a talk of taking from him his command, and that the Queen, his patroness, was ill, beyond all hopes of recovery. This intimation, it is presumed, was referred to by Roldan in his despatches to the Admiral, wherein he mentioned that certain things had been communicated to him by Ojeda, which he did not think it safe to confide to a letter.

Roldan now repaired to the ships. He found several persons on board with whom he was acquainted, and who had already been in Hispaniola. They confirmed the truth of what Ojeda had said, and showed a license signed by the Bishop of Fonseca, as superintendent of the affairs of the Indians, authorizing him to sail on a voyage of discovery.*

It appeared from the report of Ojeda and his followers that the glowing accounts sent home by Columbus of his late discoveries on the coast of Paria, his magnificent speculations with respect to the riches of the newly found country, and the specimens of pearls transmitted to the sovereigns, had inflamed the cupidity of various adventurers. Ojeda happened to be at that time in Spain. He was a favorite of

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 3.

the Bishop of Fonseca, and obtained a sight of the letter written by the Admiral to the sovereigns, and the charts and maps of his route by which it was accompanied. Ojeda knew Columbus to be embarrassed by the seditions of Hispaniola; he found by his conversation with Fonseca and other of the Admiral's enemies, that strong doubts and jealousies existed in the mind of the King with respect to his conduct, and that his approaching downfall was confidently predicted. The idea of taking advantage of these circumstances struck Ojeda, and, by a private enterprise, he hoped to be the first in gathering the wealth of these newly discovered regions. He communicated his project to his patron, Fonseca. The latter was but too ready for anything that might defeat the plans and obscure the glory of Columbus; and it may be added that he always showed himself more disposed to patronize mercenary adventurers than upright and high-minded men. He granted Ojeda every facility; furnishing him with copies of the papers and charts of Columbus, by which to direct himself in his course, and a letter of license signed with his own name, though not with that of the sovereigns. In this, it was stipulated that he should not touch at any land belonging to the King of Portugal, nor any that had been dis-

covered by Columbus prior to 1495. The last provision shows the perfidious artifice of Fonseca, as it left Paria and the Pearl Islands free to the visits of Ojeda, they having been discovered by Columbus subsequent to the designated year. The ships were to be fitted out at the charges of the adventurers, and a certain proportion of the products of the voyage were to be rendered to the Crown.

Under this license Ojeda fitted out four ships at Seville, assisted by many eager and wealthy speculators. Among the number was the celebrated Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant, well acquainted with geography and navigation. The principal pilot of the expedition was Juan de la Cosa, a mariner of great repute, a disciple of the Admiral, whom he had accompanied in his first voyage of discovery, and in that along the southern coast of Cuba, and round the island of Jamaica. There were several also of the mariners, and Bartholomew Roldan, a distinguished pilot, who had been with Columbus in his voyage to Paria.* Such was the expedition which, by a singular train of circumstances, eventually gave the name of this Florentine merchant, Amerigo Vespucci, to the whole of the New World.

This expedition had sailed in May, 1499.

* Las Casas.

The adventurers had arrived on the southern continent, and ranged along its coast, from two hundred leagues east of the Oroonoko, to the gulf of Paria. Guided by the charts of Columbus, they had passed through this gulf, and through the Boca del Dragon, and had kept along westward to Cape de la Vela, visiting the island of Margarita and the adjacent continent, and discovering the gulf of Venezuela. They had subsequently touched the Caribbee Islands, where they had fought with the fierce natives, and made many captives, with the intention of selling them in the slave-markets of Spain. Thence, being in need of supplies, they had sailed to Hispaniola, having performed the most extensive voyage hitherto made along the shores of the New World.*

Having collected all the information that he could obtain concerning these voyagers, their adventures and designs, and trusting to the declaration of Ojeda, that he should proceed forthwith to present himself to the Admiral, Roldan returned to San Domingo to render a report of his mission.

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 4 Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, part in MS. unpublished.

Chapter VI.

MANŒUVRES OF ROLDAN AND OJEDA.

[1500.]

WHEN intelligence was brought to Columbus of the nature of the expedition of Ojeda, and the license under which he sailed, he considered himself deeply aggrieved, it being a direct infraction of his most important prerogatives, and sanctioned by authority which ought to have held them sacred. He awaited patiently however the promised visit of Alonso de Ojeda to obtain fuller explanations. Nothing was further from the intention of that roving commander than to keep such promise; he had made it merely to elude the vigilance of Roldan. As soon as he had refitted his vessels and obtained a supply of provisions, he sailed round to the coast of Xaragua, where he arrived in February. Here he was well received by the

Spaniards resident in that province, who supplied all his wants. Among them were many of the late comrades of Roldan, loose, random characters, impatient of order and restraint, and burning with animosity against the Admiral, for having again brought them under the wholesome authority of the laws.

Knowing the rash and fearless character of Ojeda, and finding that there were jealousies between him and the Admiral, they hailed him as a new leader, come to redress their fancied grievances in place of Roldan, whom they considered as having deserted them. They made clamorous complaints to Ojeda of the injustice of the Admiral, whom they charged with withholding from them the arrears of their pay.

Ojeda was a hot-headed man with somewhat of a vaunting spirit, and immediately set himself up for a redressor of grievances. It is said also that he gave himself out as authorized by government, in conjunction with Carvajal, to act as counsellors or rather supervisors of the Admiral, and that one of the first measures they were to take was to enforce the payment of all salaries due to the servants of the Crown.* It is questionable however whether Ojeda made any pretension of the kind, which could so readily be disproved and

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 48.

would have tended to disgrace him with the government. It is probable that he was encouraged in his intermeddling, chiefly by his knowledge of the tottering state of the Admiral's favor at court and of his own security in the powerful protection of Fonseca. He may have imbibed also the opinion, diligently fostered by those with whom he had chiefly communicated in Spain just before his departure, that these people had been driven to extremities by the oppression of the Admiral and his brothers. Some feeling of generosity therefore may have mingled with his usual love of action and enterprise, when he proposed to redress all their wrongs, put himself at their head, march at once to San Domingo, and oblige the admiral to pay them on the spot or expel him from the island.

The proposition of Ojeda was received with acclamations of transport by some of the rebels, others made objections. Quarrels arose; a ruffianly scene of violence and brawl ensued, in which several were killed and wounded on both sides, but the party for the expedition to San Domingo remained triumphant.

Fortunately for the peace and safety of the Admiral, Roldan arrived in the neighborhood just at this critical juncture, attended by a crew of resolute fellows. He had been des-

patched by Columbus to watch the movements of Ojeda, on hearing of his arrival on the coast of Xaragua. Apprised of the violent scenes which were taking place, Roldan when on the way sent to his old confederate, Diego de Escobar, to follow him with all the trusty force he could collect. They reached Xaragua within a day of each other. An instance of the bad faith usual between bad men was now evinced. The former partisans of Roldan finding him earnest in his intention of serving the government, and that there was no hope of engaging him in their new sedition, sought to waylay and destroy him on his march, but his vigilance and celerity prevented them.*

Ojeda, when he heard of the approach of Roldan and Escobar, retired on board of his ships. Though of a daring spirit he had no inclination in the present instance to come to blows, where there was a certainty of desperate fighting and no gain; and where he must raise his arm against government. Roldan now issued such remonstrances as had often been ineffectually addressed to himself. He wrote to Ojeda, reasoning with him on his conduct, and the confusion he was producing in the island, and inviting him on shore to an amicable arrangement of all alleged grievan-

* *Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.*

ces. Ojeda, knowing the crafty, violent character of Roldan, disregarded his repeated messages, and refused to venture within his power. He even seized one of his messengers, Diego de Truxillo, and landing suddenly at Xaragua, carried off another of his followers named Toribio de Lenares—both of whom he detained in irons on board of his vessel, as hostages for a certain Juan Pintor, a one-armed sailor who had deserted, threatening to hang them if the deserter was not given up.*

Various manœuvres took place between these two well-matched opponents, each wary of the address and prowess of the other. Ojeda made sail and stood twelve leagues to the northward to the province of Cahay, one of the most beautiful and fertile parts of the country, and inhabited by a kind and gentle people. Here he landed with forty men, seizing upon whatever he could find of the provisions of the natives. Roldan and Escobar followed along shore and were soon at his heels. Roldan then despatched Escobar in a light canoe paddled swiftly by Indians, who approaching within hail of the ship, informed Ojeda that since he would not trust himself on shore, Roldan would come and confer with him on board, if he would send a boat for him.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 169, MS.

Ojeda now thought himself secure of his enemy. He immediately despatched a boat within a short distance of the shore, where the crew lay on their oars, requiring Roldan to come to them. "How many may accompany me?" demanded the latter. "Only five or six," was the reply. Upon this Diego de Escobar and four others waded to the boat. The crew refused to admit more. Roldan then ordered one man to carry him to the barge and another to walk by his side and assist him. By this stratagem his party was eight strong. The instant he entered the boat, he ordered the oarsmen to row to shore. On their refusing, he and his companions attacked them sword in hand, wounded several and made all prisoners excepting an Indian archer, who plunging under the water escaped by swimming.

This was an important triumph for Roldan. Ojeda, anxious for the recovery of his boat, which was indispensable for the service of the ship, now made overtures of peace. He approached the shore in his remaining boat of small size, taking with him his principal pilot, an arquebusier, and four oarsmen. Roldan entered the boat he had just captured with seven rowers and fifteen fighting men, causing fifteen others to be ready on shore to embark in a large canoe in case of need. A charac-

teristic interview took place between these doughty antagonists, each keeping warily on his guard. Their conference was carried on at a distance. Ojeda justified his hostile movements by alleging that Roldan had come with an armed force to seize him. This the latter positively denied, promising him the most amicable reception from the Admiral in case he would repair to San Domingo. An arrangement was at length effected; the boat was restored, and mutual restitution of the men took place, with the exception of Juan Pintor, the one-armed deserter, who had absconded; and on the following day Ojeda, according to agreement, set sail to leave the island, threatening however to return at a future time with more ships and men.*

Roldan waited in the neighborhood, doubting the truth of his departure. In the course of a few days word was brought that Ojeda had landed on a distant part of the coast. He immediately pursued him with eighty men in canoes, sending scouts by land. Before he arrived at the place Ojeda had again made sail, and Roldan saw and heard no more of him. Las Casas asserts however that Ojeda departed either to some remote district of Hispaniola, or to the island of Porto Rico, where he made

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

up what he called his *Cavalgada*, or drove of slaves—carrying off numbers of the unhappy natives, whom he sold in the slave-market of Cadiz.*

* Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 169.

Chapter VII.

CONSPIRACY OF GUEVARA AND MOXICA.

[1500.]

WHEN men have been accustomed to act falsely, they take great merit to themselves for an exertion of common honesty. The followers of Roldan were loud in trumpeting forth their unwonted loyalty, and the great services they had rendered to government in driving Ojeda from the island. Like all reformed knaves they expected that their good conduct would be amply rewarded. Looking upon their leader as having everything in his gift, and being well pleased with the delightful province of Cahay, they requested him to share the land among them that they might settle there. Roldan would have had no hesitation in granting their request had it been made during his freebooting career, but he was now anxious to establish a character for adherence to the laws.

He declined, therefore, acceding to their wishes until sanctioned by the Admiral. Knowing however that he had fostered a spirit among these men which it was dangerous to contradict, and that their rapacity, by long indulgence, did not admit of delay, he shared among them certain lands of his own, in the territory of his ancient host Behechio, Cacique of Xaragua. He then wrote to the Admiral for permission to return to San Domingo, and received a letter in reply, giving him many thanks and commendations for the diligence and address which he had manifested, but requesting him to remain for a time in Xaragua, lest Ojeda should be yet hovering about the coast and disposed to make another descent into that province.

The troubles of the island were not yet at an end, but were destined again to break forth, and from somewhat of a romantic cause. There arrived about this time at Xaragua a young cavalier of noble birth, named Don Hernando de Guevara. He possessed an agreeable person and winning manners, but was headstrong in his passions and dissolute in his principles. He was cousin to Adrian de Moxica, one of the most active ringleaders in the late rebellion of Roldan, and had conducted himself with such licentiousness at San Domingo, that Co-

lumbus had banished him from the island. There being no other opportunity of embarking he had been sent to Xaragua, to return to Spain in one of the ships of Ojeda, but arrived after their departure. Roldan received him favorably on account of his old comrade, Adrian de Moxica, and permitted him to choose some place of residence until further orders concerning him should arrive from the Admiral. He chose the province of Cahay at the place where Roldan had captured the boat of Ojeda. It was a delightful part of that beautiful coast, but the reason why Guevara chose it was its vicinity to Xaragua. While at the latter place, in consequence of the indulgence of Roldan, he was favorably received at the house of Anacaona, widow of Caonabo and sister of the Cacique Behechio. That remarkable woman still retained her partiality to the Spaniards, notwithstanding the disgraceful scenes which had passed before her eyes; and the native dignity of her character had commanded the respect even of the dissolute rabble which infested her province. By her late husband, the Cacique Caonabo, she had a daughter named Higuenamota, just grown up, and greatly admired for her beauty. Guevara being often in company with her, a mutual attachment ensued. It was to be near

her that he chose Cahay as a residence, at a place where his cousin Adrian de Moxica kept a number of dogs and hawks to be employed in the chase. Guevara delayed his departure. Roldan discovered the reason and warned him to desist from his pretensions and leave the province. Las Casas intimates that Roldan was himself attached to the young Indian beauty and jealous of her preference of his rival. Anacaona, the mother, pleased with the gallant appearance and ingratiating manners of the youthful cavalier, favored his attachment, especially as he sought her daughter in marriage. Notwithstanding the orders of Roldan, Guevara still lingered in Xaragua in the house of Anacaona, and sending for a priest, desired him to baptize his intended bride.

Hearing of this Roldan sent for Guevara and rebuked him sharply for remaining at Xaragua, and attempting to deceive a person of the importance of Anacaona by ensnaring the affections of her daughter. Guevara avowed the strength of his passion and his correct intentions, and entreated permission to remain. Roldan was inflexible. He alleged that some evil construction might be put on his conduct by the Admiral; but it is probable that his true motive was a desire to send away a rival

who interfered with his own amorous designs. Guevara obeyed, but had scarce been three days at Cahay, when unable to remain longer absent from the object of his passion he returned to Xaragua accompanied by four or five friends, and concealed himself in the dwelling of Anacaona. Roldan, who was at this time confined by a malady in his eyes, being apprised of his return, sent orders for him to depart instantly to Cahay. The young cavalier assumed a tone of defiance. He warned Roldan not to make foes when he had such great need of friends, for to his certain knowledge the Admiral intended to behead him. Upon this Roldan commanded him to quit that part of the island and repair to San Domingo, to present himself before the Admiral. The thoughts of being banished entirely from the vicinity of his Indian beauty checked the vehemence of the youth. He changed his tone of haughty defiance into one of humble supplication, and Roldan, appeased by this submission, permitted him to remain for the present in the neighborhood.

Roldan had instilled wilfulness and violence into the hearts of his late followers, and now was doomed to experience the effects. Guevara, incensed at his opposition to his passion, meditated revenge. He soon made a party

among the old comrades of Roldan, who detested as a magistrate the man they had idolized as a leader. It was concerted to rise suddenly upon him, and either to kill him or put out his eyes. Roldan was apprised of the plot, and proceeded with his usual promptness. Guevara was seized in the dwelling of Anacaona, in the presence of his intended bride; seven of his accomplices were likewise arrested, Roldan immediately sent an account of the affair to the Admiral, professing, at present, to do nothing without his authority, and declaring himself not competent to judge impartially in the case. Columbus, who was at that time at Fort Conception, in the Vega, ordered the prisoners to be conducted to the fortress of San Domingo.

The vigorous measures of Roldan against his old comrades produced commotions in the island. When Adrian de Moxica heard that his cousin Guevara was a prisoner, and that, too, by command of his former confederate, he was highly exasperated and resolved on vengeance. Hastening to Bonao, the old haunt of rebellion, he obtained the co-operation of Pedro Requelme, the recently appointed alcalde. They went round among their late companions in rebellion, who had received lands and settled in various parts of the Vega, working upon their

ready passions, and enlisting their feelings in the cause of an old comrade. These men seem to have had an irresistible propensity to sedition. Guevara was a favorite with them all. The charms of the Indian beauty had probably their influence; and the conduct of Roldan was pronounced a tyrannical interference, to prevent a marriage agreeable to all parties, and beneficial to the colony. There is no being so odious to his former associates as a reformed robber, or a rebel, enlisted in the service of justice. The old scenes of faction were renewed; the weapons which had scarce been hung up from the recent rebellions, were again snatched down from the walls, and rash preparations were made for action. Moxica soon saw a body of daring and reckless men ready with horse and weapon to follow him on any desperate enterprise. Blinded by the impunity which had attended their former outrages, he now threatened acts of great atrocity, meditating not merely the rescue of his cousin, but the death of Roldan and the Admiral.

Columbus was at Fort Conception, with an inconsiderable force, when this dangerous plot was concerted in his very neighborhood. Not dreaming of any further hostilities from men on whom he had lavished favors, he would doubtless have fallen into their power, had not

intelligence been brought him of the plot by a deserter from the conspirators. He saw at a glance the perils by which he was surrounded, and the storm about to burst upon the island. It was no longer a time for lenient measures; he determined to strike a blow which should crush the very head of rebellion.

Taking with him but six or seven trusty servants, and three esquires, all well armed, he set out in the night for the place where the ringleaders were quartered. Confiding probably in the secrecy of their plot, and the late passiveness of the Admiral, they appear to have been perfectly unguarded. Columbus came upon them by surprise, seized Moxica and several of his principal confederates, and bore them off to Fort Conception. The moment was critical; the Vega was ripe for a revolt; he had the fomenter of the conspiracy in his power, and an example was called for, that should strike terror into the factious. He ordered Moxica to be hanged on the top of the fortress. The latter entreated to be allowed to confess himself previous to execution. A priest was summoned. The miserable Moxica, who had been so arrogant in rebellion, lost all courage at the near approach of death. He delayed to confess, beginning and pausing, and recommencing,

and again hesitating, as if he hoped, by whiling away time, to give a chance for rescue. Instead of confessing his own sins, he accused others of criminality, who were known to be innocent; until Columbus, incensed at this falsehood and treachery, and losing all patience, in his mingled indignation and scorn, ordered the dastard wretch to be swung off from the battlements.*

This sudden act of severity was promptly followed up. Several of the accomplices of Moxica were condemned to death, and thrown in irons to await their fate. Before the conspirators had time to recover from their astonishment, Pedro Requelme was taken with several of his compeers in his ruffian den at Bonao, and conveyed to the fortress of San Domingo; where was also confined the original mover of this second rebellion, Hernando de Guevara, the lover of the young Indian princess. These unexpected acts of rigor, proceeding from a quarter which had been long so lenient, had the desired effect. The conspirators fled for the most part to Xaragua, their old and favorite retreat. They were not suffered to congregate there again and concert new seditions. The Adelantado, seconded by Roldan, pursued them with his characteristic

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap, 5.

rapidity of movement and vigor of arm. It has been said that he carried a priest with him in order that as he arrested delinquents, they might be confessed and hanged upon the spot; but the more probable account is that he transmitted them prisoners to San Domingo. He had seventeen of them at one time confined in one common dungeon, awaiting their trial, while he continued in indefatigable pursuit of the remainder.*

These were prompt and severe measures; but when we consider how long Columbus had borne with these men, how much he had ceded and sacrificed to them, how he had been interrupted in all his great undertakings, and the welfare of the colony destroyed by their contemptible and seditious brawls; how they had abused his lenity, defied his authority, and at length attempted his life,—we cannot wonder that he should at last let fall the sword of justice, which he had hitherto held suspended.

The power of faction was now completely subdued; and the good effects of the various measures taken by Columbus since his last arrival for the benefit of the island, began to appear. The Indians seeing the inefficacy of resistance submitted to the yoke. Many gave

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 170, MS. Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 7.

signs of civilization, having in some instances adopted clothing and embraced Christianity. Assisted by their labors the Spaniards now cultivated their lands diligently, and there was every appearance of settled and regular prosperity.

Columbus considered all this happy change as brought about by the special intervention of Heaven. In a letter to Doña Juana, de la Torre, a lady of distinction, *aya* or nurse of Prince Juan, he gives an instance of those visionary fancies to which he was subject in times of illness and anxiety. In the preceeding winter, he says, about the festival of Christmas, when menaced by Indian war and domestic rebellion, when distrustful of those around him and apprehensive of disgrace at court, he sank for a time into complete despondency. In this hour of gloom when abandoned to despair, he heard in the night a voice addressing him in words of comfort: "O man of little faith! why art thou cast down? Fear nothing, I will provide for thee. The seven years of the term of gold are not expired; in that, and in all other things, I will take care of thee."

The seven years term of gold here mentioned, alludes to a vow made by Columbus on discovering the New World, and recorded by him

in a letter to the sovereigns, that within seven years he would furnish from the profits of his discoveries, fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse, for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, and an additional force of like amount, within five years afterwards.

The comforting assurance given him by the voice was corroborated, he says, that very day, by intelligence received of the discovery of a large tract of country rich in mines.* This imaginary promise of divine aid thus mysteriously given, appeared to him at present in still greater progress of fulfilment. The troubles and dangers of the island had been succeeded by tranquillity. He now anticipated the prosperous prosecution of his favorite enterprise, so long interrupted, the exploring of the regions of Paria, and the establishment of a fishery in the gulf of Pearls. How illusive were his hopes! At this moment events were maturing which were to overwhelm him with distress, strip him of his honors, and render him comparatively a wreck for the remainder of his days!

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 84.

Book VIII.

Chapter I.

REPRESENTATIONS AT COURT AGAINST COLUMBUS—BOBADILLA EMPOWERED TO EXAMINE INTO HIS CONDUCT.

[1500.]

WHILE Columbus was involved in a series of difficulties in the factious island of Hispaniola, his enemies were but too successful in undermining his reputation in the court of Spain. The report brought by Ojeda of his anticipated disgrace was not entirely unfounded; the event was considered near at hand and every perfidious exertion was made to accelerate it. Every vessel from the New World came freighted with complaints, representing Columbus and his brothers as new men, unaccustomed to command, inflated by their sudden rise from obscurity; arrogant and insulting towards men of birth and lofty spirit; oppressive of the

common people, and cruel in their treatment of the natives. The insidious and illiberal insinuation was continually urged that they were foreigners, who could have no interest in the glory of Spain or the prosperity of Spaniards; and contemptible as this plea may seem it had a powerful effect. Columbus was even accused of a design to cast off all allegiance to Spain, and either make himself sovereign of the countries he had discovered, or yield them into the hands of some other power—a slander which, however extravagant, was calculated to startle the jealous mind of Ferdinand.

It is true that by every ship Columbus likewise sent home statements written with the frankness and energy of truth, setting forth the real cause and nature of the distractions of the island, and pointing out and imploring remedies, which if properly applied might have been efficacious. His letters however, arriving at distant intervals, made but single and transient impressions on the royal mind, which were speedily effaced by the influence of daily and active misrepresentation. His enemies at court, having continual access to the sovereigns, were enabled to place everything urged against him in the strongest point of view, while they secretly neutralized the force of his vindications. They used a plau-

sible logic to prove either bad management or bad faith on his part. There was an incessant drain upon the mother country for the support of the colony. Was this compatible with the extravagant pictures he had drawn of the wealth of the island and its golden mountains, in which he had pretended to find the Ophir of ancient days, the source of all the riches of Solomon? They inferred that he had either deceived the sovereigns by designing exaggerations, or grossly wronged them by malpractices, or was totally incapable of the duties of government.

The disappointment of Ferdinand, in finding his newly discovered possessions a source of expense instead of profit, was known to press sorely on his mind. The wars, dictated by his ambition, had straitened his resources and involved him in perplexities. He had looked with confidence to the New World for relief and for ample means to pursue his triumphs; and grew impatient at the repeated demands which it occasioned on his scanty treasury. For the purpose of irritating his feelings and heightening his resentment, every disappointed and repining man who returned from the colony was encouraged by the hostile faction to put in claims for pay withheld by Columbus, or losses sustained in his service,

This was especially the case with the disorderly ruffians shipped off to free the island from sedition. Finding their way to the court at Granada they followed the King when he rode out, filling the air with their complaints and clamoring for their pay. At one time about fifty of these vagabonds found their way into the inner court of the Alhambra, under the royal apartments; holding up bunches of grapes as the meagre diet left them by their poverty, and railing aloud at the deceits of Columbus and the cruel neglect of government. The two sons of Columbus, who were pages to the Queen, happening to pass by, they followed them with imprecations, exclaiming: "There go the sons of the Admiral, the whelps of him who discovered the land of vanity and delusion, the grave of Spanish *hidalgos*." *

The incessant repetition of falsehood will gradually wear its way into the most candid mind. Isabella herself began to entertain doubts respecting the conduct of Columbus. Where there was such universal and incessant complaint it seemed reasonable to conclude that there must exist some fault. If Columbus and his brothers were upright they might be injudicious; and in government mischief

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 85.

is oftener produced through error of judgment than iniquity of design. The letters written by Columbus himself presented a lamentable picture of the confusion of the island. Might not this arise from the weakness and incapacity of the rulers? Even granting that the prevalent abuses arose in a great measure from the enmity of the people to the Admiral and his brothers, and their prejudices against them as foreigners, was it safe to intrust so important and distant a command to persons so unpopular with the community?

These considerations had much weight in the candid mind of Isabella, but they were all-powerful with the cautious and jealous Ferdinand. He had never regarded Columbus with real cordiality; and ever since he had ascertained the importance of his discoveries had regretted the extensive powers vested in his hands. The excessive clamors which had arisen during the brief administration of the Adelantado and the breaking out of the faction of Roldan, at length determined the King to send out some person of consequence and ability to investigate the affairs of the colony, and if necessary for its safety to take upon himself the command. This important and critical measure it appears had been decided upon, and the papers and powers actually

drawn out in the spring of 1499. It was not carried into effect however until the following year. Various reasons have been assigned for this delay. The important services rendered by Columbus in the discovery of Paria and the Pearl Islands may have had some effect on the royal mind. The necessity of fitting out an armament just at that moment to co-operate with the Venetians against the Turks; the menacing movements of the new King of France, Louis XII.; the rebellion of the Moors of the Alpuxarra Mountains in the lately conquered kingdom of Granada; all these have been alleged as reasons for postponing a measure which called for much consideration, and might have important effects upon the newly-discovered possessions.* The most probable reason however was the strong disinclination of Isabella to take so harsh a step against a man for whom she entertained such ardent gratitude and high admiration.

At length the arrival of the ships with the late followers of Roldan, according to their capitulation, brought matters to a crisis. It is true that Ballester and Barrentes came in these ships to place the affairs of the island in a proper light; but they brought out a host of witnesses in favor of Roldan and letters writ-

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, part unpublished.

ten by himself and his confederates, attributing all their late conduct to the tyranny of Columbus and his brothers. Unfortunately the testimony of the rebels had the greatest weight with Ferdinand; and there was a circumstance in the case which suspended for a time the friendship of Isabella, hitherto the greatest dependence of Columbus.

Having a maternal interest in the welfare of the natives, the Queen had been repeatedly offended by what appeared to her pertinacity on the part of Columbus in continuing to make slaves of those taken in warfare, in contradiction to her known wishes. The same ships which brought home the companions of Roldan brought likewise a great number of slaves. Some Columbus had been obliged to grant to these men by the articles of capitulation; others they had brought away clandestinely. Among them were several daughters of caciques, seduced away from their families and their native island by these profligates. Some of these were in a state of pregnancy, others had new-born infants. The gifts and transfers of these unhappy beings were all ascribed to the will of Columbus, and represented to Isabella in the darkest colors. Her sensibility as a woman and her dignity as a Queen were instantly in arms. "What power," exclaimed

she indignantly, "has the Admiral to give away my vassals?"* Determined by one decided and peremptory act to show her abhorrence of these outrages upon humanity, she ordered all the Indians to be restored to their country and friends. Nay, more, her measure was retrospective. She commanded that those formerly sent to Spain by the Admiral should be sought out and sent back to Hispaniola. Unfortunately for Columbus, at this very juncture in one of his letters he advised the continuance of Indian slavery for some time longer, as a measure important for the welfare of the colony. This contributed to heighten the indignation of Isabella, and induced her no longer to oppose the sending out of a commission to investigate his conduct, and, if necessary, to supersede him in command.

Ferdinand was exceedingly embarrassed in appointing this commission between his sense of what was due to the character and services of Columbus, and his anxiety to retract with delicacy the powers vested in him. A pretext at length was furnished by the recent request of the Admiral that a person of talents and probity, learned in the law, might be sent out to act as chief judge; and that an impartial umpire might be appointed to decide in the affair

* Las Casas, lib. i.

between himself and Roldan. Ferdinand proposed to consult his wishes, but to unite those two officers in one; and as the person he appointed would have to decide in matters touching the highest functions of the Admiral and his brothers, he was empowered, should he find them culpable, to supersede them in the government—a singular mode of insuring partiality!

The person chosen for this momentous and delicate office was Don Francisco de Bobadilla, an officer of the royal household and a commander of the military and religious order of Calatrava. Oviedo pronounces him a very honest and religious man*; but he is represented by others, and his actions corroborate the description, as needy, passionate, and ambitious; three powerful objections to his exercising the rights of judicature in a case requiring the utmost patience, candor, and circumspection, and where the judge was to derive wealth and power from the conviction of one of the parties.

The authority vested in Bobadilla is defined in letters from the sovereigns still extant, and which deserve to be noticed chronologically; for the royal intentions appear to have varied with times and circumstances. The first was

* Oveido, *Cronica*, lib. iii., cap. 6.

dated on the 21st of March, 1499, and mentions the complaint of the Admiral, that an alcalde, and certain other persons had risen in rebellion against him.

"Wherefore," adds the letter, "we order you to inform yourself of the truth of the foregoing; to ascertain who and what persons they were who rose against the said Admiral and our magistracy, and for what cause; and what robberies and other injuries they have committed; and furthermore, to extend your inquiries to all other matters relating to the premises; and the information obtained, and the truth known, whomsoever you find culpable, *arrest their persons, and sequestrate their effects;* and thus taken, proceed against them and the absent, both civilly and criminally, and impose and inflict such fines and punishment as you may think fit."

To carry this into effect Bobadilla was authorized in case of necessity to call in the assistance of the Admiral and of all other persons in authority.

The powers here given are manifestly directed merely against the rebels and in consequence of the complaints of Columbus. Another letter, dated on the 21st of May, two months subsequent, is of quite different import. It makes no mention of Columbus, but is addressed to the various functionaries, and men of property of the islands and Terra Firma, informing them of the appointment of

Bobadilla to the government, with full civil and criminal jurisdiction. Among the powers specified is the following:

"It is our will, that if the said commander, Francisco de Bobadilla, should think it necessary for our service, and the purposes of justice, that any cavaliers, or other persons who are at present in those islands, or may arrive there, should leave them, and not return and reside in them, and that they should come and present themselves before us, he may command it in our name, and oblige them to depart; and whomsoever he thus commands, we hereby order, that immediately, without waiting to inquire or consult us, or to receive from us any other letter or command, and without interposing appeal or supplication, they obey whatever he shall say and order, under the penalties which he shall impose on our part," etc. etc.

Another letter, dated likewise on the 21st of May, in which Columbus is styled simply "Admiral of the ocean sea," orders him and his brothers to surrender the fortresses, ships, houses, arms, ammunition, cattle, and all other royal property into the hands of Bobadilla, as governor, under penalty of incurring the punishments to which those subject themselves who refuse to surrender fortresses and other trusts when commanded by their sovereigns.

A fourth letter, dated on the 26th of May, and addressed to Columbus simply by the title of Admiral, is a mere letter of credence, or-

dering him to give faith and obedience to whatever Bobadilla should impart.

The second and third of these letters was evidently provisional, and only to be produced if on examination, there should appear such delinquency on the part of Columbus and his brothers as to warrant their being divested of command.

This heavy blow, as has been shown, remained suspended for a year; yet that it was whispered about and triumphantly anticipated by the enemies of Columbus, is evident from the assertions of Ojeda, who sailed from Spain about the time of the signature of those letters, and had intimate communications with Bishop Fonseca, who was considered instrumental in producing this measure. The very license granted by the Bishop to Ojeda, to sail on a voyage of discovery in contravention of the prerogatives of the Admiral, has the air of being given on the presumption of his speedy downfall, and the same presumption, as has already been observed, must have encouraged Ojeda in his turbulent conduct at Xaragua.

At length the long-projected measure was carried into effect. Bobadilla set sail for San Domingo about the middle of July, 1500, with two caravels, in which were twenty-five men enlisted for a year to serve as a kind of guard.

There were six friars likewise, who had charge of a number of Indians sent back to their country. Besides the letters-patent, Bobadilla was authorized by royal order, to ascertain and discharge all arrears of pay due to persons in the service of the Crown; and to oblige the Admiral to pay what was due on his part, "so that those people might receive what was owing to them, and there might be no more complaints." In addition to all these powers Bobadilla was furnished with many blank letters signed by the sovereigns, to be filled up by him in such manner, and directed to such persons as he might think advisable in relation to the mission with which he was intrusted.*

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 7.

Chapter II.

ARRIVAL OF BOBADILLA AT SAN DOMINGO—HIS VIOLENT ASSUMPTION OF THE COMMAND.

[1500.]

COLUMBUS was still at Fort Conception, regulating the affairs of the Vega, after the catastrophe of the sedition of Moxica; his brother, the Adelantado, accompanied by Roldan, was pursuing and arresting the fugitive rebels in Xaragua; and Don Diego Columbus remained in temporary command at San Domingo. Faction had worn itself out, the insurgents had brought down ruin upon themselves, and the island appeared delivered from the domination of violent and lawless men.

Such was the state of public affairs when on the morning of the 23d of August two caravels were descried off the harbor of San Domingo, about a league at sea. They were standing off and on, waiting until the sea breeze, which

generally prevails about ten o'clock, should carry them into port. Don Diego Columbus supposed them to be ships sent from Spain with supplies, and hoped to find on board his nephew Diego, whom the Admiral had requested might be sent out to assist him in his various concerns. A canoe was immediately despatched to obtain information; which, approaching the caravels, inquired what news they brought, and whether Diego, the son of the Admiral, was on board. Bobadilla himself replied from the principal vessel, announcing himself as a commissioner sent out to investigate the late rebellion. The master of the caravel then inquired about the news of the island, and was informed of the recent transactions. Seven of the rebels, he was told, had been hanged that week, and five more were in the fortress of San Domingo, condemned to suffer the same fate. Among these were Pedro Requelme and Hernando de Guevara, the young cavalier whose passion for the daughter of Anacaona had been the original cause of the rebellion. Further conversation passed, in the course of which Bobadilla ascertained that the Admiral and Adelantado were absent, and Don Diego Columbus in command.

When the canoe returned to the city with the

news that a commissioner had arrived to make inquisition into the late troubles, there was a great stir and agitation throughout the community. Knots of whisperers gathered at every corner; those who were conscious of malpractices were filled with consternation; while those who had grievances, real or imaginary, to complain of, especially those whose pay was in arrear, appeared with joyful countenances.*

As the vessels entered the river, Bobadilla beheld on either bank a gibbet with the body of a Spaniard hanging on it, apparently but lately executed. He considered these as conclusive proofs of the alleged cruelty of Columbus. Many boats came off to the ship, every one being anxious to pay early court to this public censor. Bobadilla remained on board all day, in the course of which he collected much of the rumors of the place; and as those who sought to secure his favor were those who had most to fear from his investigations, it is evident that the nature of the rumors must generally have been unfavorable to Columbus. In fact, before Bobadilla landed, if not before he arrived, the culpability of the Admiral was decided in his mind.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 169. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 8.

ter of the sovereigns, but again observed that they held the prisoners in obedience to the Admiral, to whom the sovereigns had granted letters of a higher nature.

The self-importance of Bobadilla was incensed at this non-compliance, especially as he saw it had some effect upon the populace, who appeared to doubt his authority. He now produced the third mandate of the Crown, ordering Columbus and his brothers to deliver up all fortresses, ships, and other royal property. To win the public completely to his side, he read also the additional mandate issued on the 30th of May of the same year, ordering him to pay the arrears of wages due to all persons in the royal service, and to compel the Admiral to pay the arrears of those to whom he was accountable.

This last document was received with shouts by the multitude, many having long arrears due to them in consequence of the poverty of the treasury. Flushed with his growing importance, Bobadilla again demanded the prisoners; threatening, if refused, to take them by force. Meeting with the same reply, he repaired to the fortress to execute his threats. This post was commanded by Miguel Diaz, the same Arragonian cavalier who had once taken refuge among the Indians on

the banks of the Ozema, won the affections of the female Cacique Catalina, received from her information of the neighboring gold mines, and induced his countrymen to remove to those parts.

When Bobadilla came before the fortress he found the gates closed, and the Alcayde, Miguel Diaz, upon the battlements. He ordered his letters-patent to be read with a loud voice, the signatures and seals to be held up to view, and then demanded the surrender of the prisoners. Diaz requested a copy of the letters; but this Bobadilla refused, alleging that there was no time for delay, the prisoners being under sentence of death and liable at any moment to be executed. He threatened at the same time that if they were not given up he would proceed to extremities, and Diaz should be answerable for the consequences. The wary Alcayde again required time to reply and a copy of the letters; saying that he held the fortress for the King, by the command of the Admiral, his lord, who had gained these territories and islands, and that when the latter arrived he should obey his orders.*

The whole spirit of Bobadilla was roused within him at the refusal of the Alcayde. Assembling all the people he had brought

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 179.

from Spain, together with the sailors of the ships and the rabble of the place, he exhorted them to aid him in getting possession of the prisoners, but to harm no one unless in case of resistance. The mob shouted assent, for Bobadilla was already the idol of the multitude. About the hour of vespers he set out at the head of his motley army to storm a fortress destitute of a garrison, and formidable only in name, being calculated to withstand only a naked and slightly armed people. The accounts of this transaction have something in them bordering on the ludicrous, and give it the air of absurd rhodomontade. Bobadilla assailed the portal with great impetuosity, the frail bolts and locks of which gave way at the first shock, and allowed him easy admission. In the meantime however his zealous myrmidons applied ladders to the walls as if about to carry the place by assault, and to experience a desperate defence. The Alcayde Miguel Diaz and Don Diego de Alvarado alone appeared on the battlements; they had drawn swords but offered no resistance. Bobadilla entered the fortress in triumph and without molestation. The prisoners were found in a chamber in irons. He ordered that they should be brought up to him to the top of the fortress, where, having put a few questions to them, as a matter of

form, he gave them in charge to an *alguazil* named Juan de Espinosa.*

Such was the arrogant and precipitate entrance into office of Francisco de Bobadilla. He had reversed the order of his written instructions; having seized upon the government before he had investigated the conduct of Columbus. He continued his career in the same spirit; acting as if the case had been prejudged in Spain, and he had been sent out merely to degrade the Admiral from his employments, not to ascertain the manner in which he had fulfilled them. He took up his residence in the house of Columbus, seized upon his arms, gold, plate, jewels, horses, together with his letters, and various manuscripts both public and private, even to his most secret papers. He gave no account of the property thus seized, and which he no doubt considered already confiscated to the Crown, excepting that he paid out of it the wages of those to whom the Admiral was in arrears.† To increase his favor with the people he proclaimed on the second day of his assumption of power, a general license for the term of twenty years to seek for gold, paying merely

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.* Herrera, *ubi sup.*

† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 85. Las Casas, Herrera, *ubi sup.*

one eleventh to government, instead of a third as heretofore. At the same time he spoke in the most disrespectful and unqualified terms of Columbus, saying that he was empowered to send him home in chains, and that neither he nor any of his lineage would ever again be permitted to govern in the island.*

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

Chapter III.

COLUMBUS SUMMONED TO APPEAR BEFORE BOBADILLA.

[1500.]

WHEN the tidings reached Columbus at Fort Conception of the high-handed proceedings of Bobadilla, he considered them the unauthorized acts of some rash adventurer like Ojeda. Since government had apparently thrown open the door to private enterprise, he might expect to have his path continually crossed and his jurisdiction infringed by bold intermeddlers, feigning or fancying themselves authorized to interfere in the affairs of the colony. Since the departure of Ojeda another squadron had touched upon the coast and produced a transient alarm, being an expedition under one of the Pinzons, licensed by the sovereigns to make discoveries. There had also been a rumor of another squadron hovering about the island, which proved however to be unfounded.*

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

The conduct of Bobadilla bore all the appearance of a lawless usurpation of some intruder of the kind. He had possessed himself forcibly of the fortress and consequently of the town. He had issued extravagant licenses injurious to the government, and apparently intended only to make partisans among the people, and had threatened to throw Columbus himself in irons. That this man could really be sanctioned by government in such intemperate measures was repugnant to belief. The Admiral's consciousness of his own services, the repeated assurances he had received of high consideration on the part of the sovereigns, and the perpetual prerogatives granted to him under their hand and seal with all the solemnity that a compact could possess, all forbade him to consider the transactions at San Domingo otherwise than as outrages on his authority by some daring and misguided individual.

To be nearer to San Domingo and obtain more correct information he proceeded to Bonao, which was now beginning to assume the appearance of a settlement, several Spaniards having erected houses there and cultivated the adjacent country. He had scarcely reached the place when an alcalde, bearing a staff of office, arrived there from San Domingo, proclaiming the appointment of Bobadilla to the

government, and bearing copies of his letters-patent. There was no especial letter or message sent to the Admiral, nor were any of the common forms of courtesy and ceremony observed in superseding him in the command. All the proceedings of Bobadilla towards him were abrupt and insulting.

Columbus was exceedingly embarrassed how to act. It was evident that Bobadilla was intrusted with extensive powers by the sovereigns, but that they could have exercised such a sudden, unmerited, and apparently capricious act of severity as that of divesting him of all his commands he could not believe. He endeavored to persuade himself that Bobadilla was some person sent out to exercise the functions of chief judge, according to the request he had written home to the sovereigns, and that they had intrusted him likewise with provisional powers to make an inquest into the late troubles of the island. All beyond these powers he tried to believe were mere assumptions and exaggerations of authority, as in the case of Aguado. At all events, he was determined to act upon such presumptions, and to endeavor to gain time. If the monarchs had really taken any harsh measures with respect to him, it must have been in consequence of misrepresentations. The least delay might

give them an opportunity of ascertaining their error and making the necessary amends.

He wrote to Bobadilla therefore in guarded terms, welcoming him to the island; cautioning him against precipitate measures, especially in granting licenses to collect gold; informing him that he was on the point of going to Spain, and in a little time would leave him in command, with everything fully and clearly explained. He wrote at the same time to the like purport to certain monks who had come out with Bobadilla, though he observes that these letters were only written to gain time.* He received no replies; but while an insulting silence was observed towards him, Bobadilla filled up several of the blank letters, of which he had a number signed by the sovereigns, and sent them to Roldan and other of the Admiral's enemies, the very men whom he had been sent out to judge. These letters were full of civilities and promises of favor.†

To prevent any mischief which might arise from the licenses and indulgences so prodigally granted by Bobadilla, Columbus published by word and letter that the powers assumed by him could not be valid nor his licenses availing, as he himself held superior powers

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

† *Idem.* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv.

granted to him in perpetuity by the Crown, which could no more be superseded in this instance than they had been in that of Aguado.

For some time Columbus remained in this anxious and perplexed state of mind, uncertain what line of conduct to pursue in so singular and unlooked-for a conjuncture. Francisco Velasquez, deputy treasurer, and Juan de Trasierra, a Franciscan friar, arrived at Bonao and delivered to him the royal letter of credence signed by the sovereigns on the 26th of May, 1499, commanding him to give implicit faith and obedience to Bobadilla; and they delivered at the same time a summons from the latter to appear immediately before him.

This laconic letter from the sovereigns struck at once at the root of all his dignity and power. He no longer made hesitation or demur, but complying with the peremptory summons of Bobadilla departed almost alone and unattended for San Domingo.*

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 9. Letter to the nurse of Prince Juan.

Chapter IV.

COLUMBUS AND HIS BROTHERS ARRESTED AND SENT TO SPAIN IN CHAINS.

[1500.]

THE tidings that a new governor had arrived, and that Columbus was in disgrace and to be sent home in chains circulated rapidly through the Vega, and the colonists hastened from all parts to San Domingo to make interest with Bobadilla. It was soon perceived that there was no surer way than that of vilifying his predecessor. Bobadilla felt that he had taken a rash step in seizing upon the government, and that his own safety required the conviction of Columbus. He listened eagerly, therefore, to all accusations, public or private; and welcome was he who could bring any charge, however extravagant, against the Admiral and his brothers.

Hearing that the Admiral was on his way to the city, he made a bustle of preparation and

armed the troops, affecting to believe a rumor that Columbus had called upon the caciques of the Vega to aid him with their subjects in a resistance to the commands of government. No grounds appear for this absurd report, which was probably invented to give a coloring of precaution to subsequent measures of violence and insult. The Admiral's brother, Don Diego, was seized, thrown in irons and confined on board of a caravel, without any reason being assigned for his imprisonment.

In the meantime Columbus pursued his journey to San Domingo, travelling in a lonely manner, without guards or retinue. Most of his people were with the Adelantado, and he had declined being attended by the remainder. He had heard of the rumors of the hostile intentions of Bobadilla ; and although he knew that violence was threatened to his person, he came in this unpretending manner, to manifest his pacific feelings and to remove all suspicion.*

No sooner did Bobadilla hear of his arrival, than he gave orders to put him in irons, and confine him in the fortress. This outrage to a person of such dignified and venerable appearance, and such eminent merit, seemed, for the time, to shock even his enemies. When the irons were brought, every one present

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 180.

shrank from the task of putting them on him, either from a sentiment of compassion at so great a reverse of fortune, or out of habitual reverence for his person. To fill the measure of ingratitude meted out to him, it was one of his own domestics, "a graceless and shameless cook," says Las Casas, "who with unwashed front, riveted the fetters with as much readiness and alacrity, as though he were serving him with choice and savory viands. I knew the fellow," adds the venerable historian, "and I think his name was Espinosa."*

Columbus conducted himself with characteristic magnanimity under the injuries heaped upon him. There is a noble scorn which swells and supports the heart and silences the tongue of the truly great, when enduring the insults of the unworthy. Columbus could not stoop to deprecate the arrogance of a weak and violent man like Bobadilla. He looked beyond this shallow agent, and all his petty tyranny to the sovereigns who had employed him. Their injustice or ingratitude alone could wound his spirit; and he felt assured that when the truth came to be known, they would blush to find how greatly they had wronged him. With this proud assurance, he bore all present indignities in silence.

* Las Casas, *Hist Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 180.

Bobadilla, although he had the Admiral and Don Diego in his power and had secured the venal populace, felt anxious and ill at ease. The Adelantado, with an armed force under his command, was still in the distant province of Xaragua, in pursuit of the rebels. Knowing his soldier-like and determined spirit, he feared he might take some violent measure when he should hear of the ignominious treatment and imprisonment of his brothers. He doubted whether any order from himself would have any effect except to exasperate the stern Don Bartholomew. He sent a demand therefore to Columbus to write to his brother, requesting him to repair peaceably to San Domingo, and forbidding him to execute the persons he held in confinement; Columbus readily complied. He exhorted his brother to submit quietly to the authority of his sovereigns, and to endure all present wrongs and indignities, under the confidence that when they arrived at Castile, everything would be explained and redressed.*

* Peter Martyr mentions a vulgar rumor of the day, that the Admiral, not knowing what might happen, wrote a letter in cipher to the Adelantado, urging him to come with arms in his hands to prevent any violence that might be contrived against him; that the Adelantado advanced in effect with his armed force, but having the imprudence to proceed some distance

On receiving this letter, Don Bartholomew immediately complied. Relinquishing his command he hastened peacefully to San Domingo, and on arriving experienced the same treatment with his brothers, being put in irons and confined on board of a caravel. They were kept separate from each other, and no communication permitted between them. Bobadilla did not see them himself, nor did he allow others to visit them, but kept them in ignorance of the cause of their imprisonment, the crimes with which they were charged, and the process that was going on against them.*

ahead of it, was surprised by the governor before his men could come to his succour, and that the letter in cipher had been sent to Spain. This must have been one of the groundless rumors of the day, circulated to prejudice the public mind. Nothing of the kind appears among the charges in the inquest made by Bobadilla, and which was seen, and extracts made from it, by Las Casas, for his history. It is, in fact, in total contradiction to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus.

* Charlevoix, in his *History of San Domingo*, (lib. iii., p. 199,) states that the suit against Columbus was conducted in writing; that written charges were sent to him, to which he replied in the same way. This is contrary to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus. The Admiral himself, in his letter to the nurse of Prince Juan, after relating the manner in which he and his brother had been thrown

It had been questioned whether Bobadilla really had authority for the arrest and imprisonment of the Admiral and his brothers*; and whether such violence and indignity was contemplated by the sovereigns. He may have fancied himself empowered by the clause in the letter of instructions, dated March 21st, 1499, in which, speaking of the rebellion of Roldan, "he is authorized to *seize the persons, and sequestrate the property* of those who appeared to be culpable, and then to proceed against them and against the absent, with the highest civil and criminal penalties." This evidently had reference to the persons of Roldan and his followers, who were then in arms, and against whom Columbus had sent home complaints; and this, by a violent construction, Bobadilla seems to have wrested into an authority for seizing the person of the Admiral

into irons, and confined separately, without being visited by Bobadilla, or permitted to see any other persons, expressly adds, "I make oath that I do not know for what I am imprisoned." Again, in a letter written some time afterwards from Jamaica, he says: "I was taken and thrown with two of my brothers in a ship, loaded with irons, with little clothing and much ill-treatment, without being summoned or convicted by justice."

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 10. Oviedo *Cronica*, lib. iii., cap. 6.

himself. In fact, in the whole course of his proceedings, he reversed and confounded the order of his instructions. His first step should have been to proceed against the rebels; this he made the last. His last step should have been, in case of ample evidence against the Admiral, to have superseded him in office; and this he made the first, without waiting for evidence. Having predetermined, from the very outset, that Columbus was in the wrong, by the same rule he had to presume that all the opposite parties were in the right. It became indispensable to his own justification to inculpate the Admiral and his brothers; and the rebels he had been sent to judge became, by this singular perversion of rule, necessary and cherished evidences to criminate those against whom they had rebelled.

The intentions of the Crown, however, are not to be vindicated at the expense of its miserable agent. If proper respect had been felt for the rights and dignities of Columbus, Bobadilla would never have been intrusted with powers so extensive, undefined, and discretionary; nor would he have dared to proceed to such lengths, with such rudeness and precipitation, had he not felt assured that it would not be displeasing to the jealous-minded Ferdinand.

The old scenes of the time of Aguado were now renewed with ten-fold virulence, and the old charges revived, with others still more extravagant. From the early and never-to-be-forgotten outrage upon Castilian pride, of compelling *hidalgos* in time of emergency, to labor in the construction of works necessary to the public safety, down to the recent charge of levying war against the government, there was not a hardship, abuse, nor sedition in the island, that was not imputed to the misdeeds of Columbus and his brothers. Beside the usual accusations of inflicting oppressive labor, unnecessary tasks, painful restrictions, short allowances of food, and cruel punishments upon the Spaniards, and waging unjust wars against the natives, they were now charged with preventing the conversion of the latter, that they might send them slaves to Spain, and profit by their sale. This last charge, so contrary to the pious feelings of the Admiral, was founded on his having objected to the baptism of certain Indians of mature age, until they could be instructed in the doctrines of Christianity; justly considering it an abuse of that holy sacrament to administer it thus blindly.*

Columbus was charged also with having secreted pearls and other precious articles,

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, part unpublished.

collected in his voyage along the coast of Paria, and with keeping the sovereigns in ignorance of the nature of his discoveries there, in order to exact new privileges from them; yet it was notorious that he had sent home specimens of the pearls, and journals and charts of his voyage, by which others had been enabled to pursue his track.

Even the late tumults, now that the rebels were admitted as evidence, were all turned into matters of accusation. They were represented as spirited and loyal resistances to tyranny exercised upon the colonists and the natives. The well-merited punishments inflicted upon certain of the ringleaders were cited as proofs of a cruel and revengeful disposition, and a secret hatred of Spaniards. Bobadilla believed, or affected to believe, all these charges. He had in a manner made the rebels his confederates in the ruin of Columbus. It was become a common cause with them. He could no longer, therefore, conduct himself towards them as a judge. Guevara, Requelme, and their fellow-convicts were discharged almost without the form of a trial, and it is even said, were received into favor and countenance. Roldan from the very first had been treated with confidence by Bobadilla, and honored with his correspondence. All the

others, whose conduct had rendered them liable to justice, received either a special acquittal or a general pardon. It was enough to have been opposed in any way to Columbus, to obtain full justification in the eyes of Bobadilla.

The latter had now collected a weight of testimony, and produced a crowd of witnesses, sufficient, as he conceived, to insure the condemnation of the prisoners, and his own continuance in command. He determined, therefore, to send the Admiral and his brothers home in chains, in the vessels ready for sea, transmitting at the same time the inquest taken in their case, and writing private letters enforcing the charges made against them, and advising that Columbus should on no account be restored to the command which he had so shamefully abused.

San Domingo now swarmed with miscreants just delivered from the dungeon and the gibbet. It was a perfect jubilee of triumphant villainy and dastard malice. Every base spirit which had been awed into obsequiousness by Columbus and his brothers when in power, now started up to revenge itself upon them when in chains. The most injurious slanders were loudly proclaimed in the streets; insulting pasquinades and inflammatory libels were posted up at every corner; and horns were

blown in the neighborhood of their prisons, to taunt them with the exultings of the rabble.* When these rejoicings of the enemy reached him in his dungeon, and Columbus reflected on the inconsiderate violence already exhibited by Bobadilla, he knew not how far his rashness and confidence might carry him, and began to entertain apprehensions for his life.

The vessels being ready to make sail, Alonzo de Villejo was appointed to take charge of the prisoners, and carry them to Spain. This officer had been brought up by an uncle of Fonseca, was in the employ of that bishop, and had come out with Bobadilla. The latter instructed him, on arriving at Cadiz, to deliver his prisoners into the hands of Fonseca, or of his uncle, thinking thereby to give the malignant prelate a triumphant gratification. This circumstance gave weight with many to a report that Bobadilla was secretly instigated and encouraged in his violent measures by Fonseca, and was promised his protection and influence at court, in case of any complaints of his conduct.†

Villejo undertook the office assigned him, but he discharged it in a more generous manner than was intended. "This Alonzo de

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 86.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 180, MS.

Villejo," says the worthy Las Casas, "was an hildago of honorable character, and my particular friend." He certainly showed himself superior to the low malignity of his patrons. When he arrived with a guard to conduct the Admiral from the prison to the ship, he found him in chains in a state of silent despondency. So violently had he been treated, and so savage were the passions let loose against him, that he feared he should be sacrificed without an opportunity of being heard, and his name go down sullied and dishonored to posterity. When he beheld the officer enter with the guard, he thought it was to conduct him to the scaffold. "Villejo," said he, mournfully, "whither are you taking me?" "To the ship, your Excellency, to embark," replied the other. "To embark!" repeated the Admiral, earnestly; "Villejo! do you speak the truth?" "By the life of your Excellency," replied the honest officer, "it is true!" With these words the Admiral was comforted, and felt as one restored from death to life. Nothing can be more touching and expressive than this little colloquy, recorded by the venerable Las Casas, who doubtless had it from the lips of his friend Villejo.

The caravels set sail early in October, bearing off Columbus shackled like the vilest of

culprits, amidst the scoffs and shouts of a miscreant rabble, who took a brutal joy in heaping insults on his venerable head, and sent curses after him from the shores of the island he had so recently added to the civilized world. Fortunately the voyage was favorable, and of but moderate duration, and was rendered less disagreeable by the conduct of those to whom he was given in custody. The worthy Villejo, though in the service of Fonseca, felt deeply moved at the treatment of Columbus. The master of the caravel, Andreas Martin, was equally grieved: they both treated the Admiral with profound respect and assiduous attention. They would have taken off his irons, but to this he would not consent. "No," said he proudly, "their Majesties commanded me by letter to submit to whatever Bobadilla should order in their name; by their authority he has put upon me these chains, I will wear them until they shall order them to be taken off, and I will preserve them afterwards as relics and memorials of the reward of my services." *

"He did so," adds his son Fernando; "I saw them always hanging in his cabinet, and he requested that when he died they might be buried with him!" †

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 180, MS.

† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 86.

Book XIV.

Chapter I.

SENSATION IN SPAIN ON THE ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS IN IRONS—HIS APPEARANCE AT COURT.

[1500.]

THE arrival of Columbus at Cadiz, a prisoner and in chains, produced almost as great a sensation as his triumphant return from his first voyage. It was one of those striking and obvious facts which speak to the feelings of the multitude, and preclude the necessity of reflection. No one stopped to inquire into the case. It was sufficient to be told that Columbus was brought home in irons from the world he had discovered. There was a general burst of indignation in Cadiz, and in the powerful and opulent Seville, which was echoed throughout all Spain. If the ruin of Columbus had been the intention of his enemies, they had defeated their object by their own violence. One of those reactions took place, so frequent in the public mind when persecution is pushed to an unguarded

length. Those of the populace who had recently been loud in their clamor against Columbus, were now as loud in their reprobation of his treatment, and a strong sympathy was expressed, against which it would have been odious for the government to contend.

The tidings of his arrival, and of the ignominious manner in which he had been brought, reached the court at Granada, and filled the halls of the Alhambra with murmurs of astonishment. Columbus, full of his wrongs, but ignorant how far they had been authorized by the sovereigns, had forborne to write to them. In the course of his voyage, however, he had penned a long letter to Doña Juana de la Torre, the *aya* of Prince Juan, a lady high in favor with Queen Isabella. This letter, on his arrival at Cadiz, Andreas Martin, the captain of the caravel, permitted him to send off privately by express. It arrived, therefore, before the protocol of the proceedings instituted by Bobadilla, and from this document the sovereigns derived their first intimation of his treatment.* It contained a statement of the late transactions of the island, and of the wrongs he had suffered, written with his usual artlessness and energy. To specify the contents, would be but to recapitu-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 182.

late circumstances already recorded. Some expressions, however, which burst from him in the warmth of his feelings, are worthy of being noted. "The slanders of worthless men," says he, "have done me more injury than all my services have profited me." Speaking of the misrepresentations to which he was subjected, he observes: "Such is the evil name which I have acquired, that if I were to build hospitals and churches, they would be called dens of robbers." After relating in indignant terms the conduct of Bobadilla, in seeking testimony respecting his administration from the very men who had rebelled against him, and throwing himself and his brothers in irons, without letting them know the offences with which they were charged, "I have been much aggrieved," he adds, "in that a person should be sent out to investigate my conduct, who knew that if the evidence which he could send home should appear to be of a serious nature, he would remain in the government." He complains that, in forming an opinion of his administration, allowances had not been made for the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend, and the wild state of the country over which he had to rule. "I was judged," he observed, "as a governor who had been sent

to take charge of a well-regulated city, under the dominion of well-established laws, where there was no danger of everything running to disorder and ruin; but I ought to be judged as a captain, sent to subdue a numerous and hostile people, of manners and religion opposite to ours, living not in regular towns, but in forests and mountains. It ought to be considered that I have brought all these under subjection to their Majesties, giving them dominion over another world, by which Spain, heretofore poor, has suddenly become rich. Whatever errors I may have fallen into, they were not with an evil intention; and I believe their Majesties will credit what I say. I have known them to be merciful to those who have wilfully done them disservice; I am convinced that they will have still more indulgence for me, who have erred innocently, or by compulsion, as they will hereafter be more fully informed; and I trust they will consider my great services, the advantage of which are every day more and more apparent."

When the letter was read to the noble-minded Isabella, and she found how grossly Columbus had been wronged and the royal authority abused, her heart was filled with mingled sympathy and indignation. The tidings were confirmed by a letter from the

alcalde or *corregidor* of Cadiz, into whose hands Columbus and his brothers had been delivered until the pleasure of the sovereigns should be known*; and by another letter from Alonzo de Villejo, expressed in terms accordant with his humane and honorable conduct towards his illustrious prisoner.

However Ferdinand might have secretly felt disposed against Columbus, the momentary tide of public feeling was not to be resisted. He joined with his generous queen in her reprobation of the treatment of the Admiral, and both sovereigns hastened to give evidence to the world, that his imprisonment had been without their authority, and contrary to their wishes. Without waiting to receive any documents that might arrive from Bobadilla, they sent orders to Cadiz that the prisoners should be instantly set at liberty, and treated with all distinction. They wrote a letter to Columbus couched in terms of gratitude and affection, expressing their grief at all that he had suffered, and inviting him to court. They ordered, at the same time, that two thousand ducats should be advanced to defray his expenses.†

* Oviedo, *Cronica*, lib. iii., cap. 6.

† Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 182. Two thousand ducats, or two thousand eight hundred and forty-six dollars, equivalent to eight thousand five hundred and thirty-eight dollars of the present day.

The loyal heart of Columbus was again cheered by this declaration of his sovereigns. He felt conscious of his integrity, and anticipated an immediate restitution of all his rights and dignities. He appeared at court in Granada on the 17th of December, not as a man ruined and disgraced, but richly dressed, and attended by an honorable retinue. He was received by the sovereigns with unqualified favor and distinction. When the Queen beheld this venerable man approach, and thought on all he had deserved and all he had suffered, she was moved to tears. Columbus had borne up firmly against the rude conflicts of the world,—he had endured with lofty scorn the injuries and insults of ignoble men; but he possessed strong and quick sensibility. When he found himself thus kindly received by his sovereigns, and beheld tears in the benign eyes of Isabella, his long-suppressed feelings burst forth: he threw himself on his knees, and for some time could not utter a word for the violence of his tears and sobbings. *

Ferdinand and Isabella raised him from the ground, and endeavored to encourage him by the most gracious expressions. As soon as he regained self-possession, he entered into an eloquent and high-minded vindication of his

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 10.

loyalty, and the zeal he had ever felt for the glory and advantage of the Spanish Crown, declaring that if at any time he had erred, it had been through inexperience in government, and the extraordinary difficulties by which he had been surrounded.

There needed no vindication on his part. The intemperance of his enemies had been his best advocate. He stood in the presence of his sovereigns a deeply injured man, and it remained for them to vindicate themselves to the world from the charge of ingratitude towards their most deserving subject. They expressed their indignation at the proceedings of Bobadilla, which they disavowed, as contrary to their instructions, and declared that he should be immediately dismissed from his command.

In fact, no public notice was taken of the charges sent home by Bobadilla, nor of the letters written in support of them. The sovereigns took every occasion to treat Columbus with favor and distinction, assuring him that his grievances should be redressed, his property restored, and he reinstated in all his privileges and dignities.

It was on the latter point that Columbus was chiefly solicitous. Mercenary considerations had scarcely any weight in his mind.

Glory had been the great object of his ambition, and he felt that, as long as he remained suspended from his employments, a tacit censure rested on his name. He expected, therefore, that the moment the sovereigns should be satisfied of the rectitude of his conduct, they would be eager to make him amends; that a restitution of the viceroyalty would immediately take place, and he should return in triumph to San Domingo. Here, however, he was doomed to experience a disappointment which threw a gloom over the remainder of his days. To account for this flagrant want of justice and gratitude in the Crown, it is expedient to notice a variety of events which had materially affected the interests of Columbus in the eyes of the politic Ferdinand.

Chapter II.

CONTEMPORARY VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY.

THE general license granted by the Spanish sovereigns in 1495, to undertake voyages of discovery, had given rise to various expeditions by enterprising individuals, chiefly persons who had sailed with Columbus in his first voyages. The government, unable to fit out many armaments itself, was pleased to have its territories thus extended, free of cost, and its treasury at the same time benefited by the share of the proceeds of these voyages, reserved as a kind of duty to the Crown. These expeditions had chiefly taken place while Columbus was in partial disgrace with the sovereigns. His own charts and journal served as guides to the adventurers; and his magnificent accounts of Paria and the adjacent coasts had chiefly excited their cupidity.

Beside the expedition of Ojeda, already noticed, in the course of which he touched

at Xaragua, one who had been undertaken at the same time by Pedro Alonzo Niño, a native of Moguer, an able pilot, who had been with Columbus in the voyages to Cuba and Paria. Having obtained a license, he interested a rich merchant of Seville in the undertaking, who fitted out a caravel of fifty tons burden, under condition that his brother Christoval Guevra should have the command. They sailed from the bar of Saltes, a few days after Ojeda had sailed from Cadiz, in the spring of 1499, and arriving on the coast of Terra Firma, to the south of Paria, ran along it for some distance, passed through the gulf, and thence went one hundred and thirty leagues along the shore of the present republic of Colombia, visiting what was afterwards called the Pearl Coast. They landed in various places; disposed of their European trifles to immense profit, and returned with a large store of gold and pearls; having made, in their diminutive bark, one of the most extensive and lucrative voyages yet accomplished.

About the same time, the Pinzons, that family of bold and opulent navigators, fitted out an armament of four caravels at Palos, manned in a great measure by their relations and friends. Several experienced pilots embarked in it who had been with Columbus to

Paria, and it was commanded by Vicente Yañez Pinzon, who had been captain of a caravel in the squadron of the Admiral on his first voyage.

Pinzon was a hardy and experienced seaman, and did not, like the others, follow closely in the track of Columbus. Sailing in December, 1499, he passed the Canary and Cape Verde Islands, standing southwest until he lost sight of the polar star. Here he encountered a terrible storm and was exceedingly perplexed and confounded by the new aspect of the heavens. Nothing was yet known of the southern hemisphere, nor of the beautiful constellation of the cross, which in those regions has since supplied to mariners the place of the north star. The voyagers had expected to find at the south pole a star correspondent to that of the north. They were dismayed at beholding no guide of the kind, and thought there must be some prominent swelling of the earth, which hid the pole from their view.*

Pinzon continued on however with great intrepidity. On the 26th of January, 1500, he saw at a distance a great headland, which he called Cape Santa Maria de la Consolacion, but which has since been named Cape St. Augustine. He landed and took possession

* Peter Martyr, decad. i., lib. ix.

of the country in the name of their Catholic Majesties, being a part of the territories since called the Brazils. Standing thence westward he discovered the Maragnon, since called the river of the Amazons, traversed the gulf of Paria, and continued across the Caribbean Sea and the gulf of Mexico, until he found himself among the Bahamas, where he lost two of his vessels on the rocks near the island of Jumeto. He returned to Palos in September, having added to his former glory that of being the first European who had crossed the equinoctial line in the western ocean and of having discovered the famous kingdom of Brazil, from its commencement at the river Maragnon to its most eastern point. As a reward for his achievements, power was granted to him to colonize and govern the lands which he had discovered and which extended southward from a little beyond the river of Maragnon to Cape St. Augustine.*

The little port of Palos, which had been so slow in furnishing the first squadron for Columbus, was now continually agitated by the passion for discovery. Shortly after the sailing of Pinzon, another expedition was fitted out there by Diego Lepe, a native of the place,

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 12. Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, part unpublished.

Portrait of Vasco da Gama.

From the Sloane MS. 197, folio 18.

those seas, he had great difficulty in reaching Xaragua in Hispaniola, where he lost his two caravels, and proceeded with his crew by land to San Domingo. Here he was seized and imprisoned by Bobadilla, under pretext that he had treated for gold with the natives of Xaragua.*

Such was the swarm of Spanish expeditions immediately resulting from the enterprises of Columbus; but others were also undertaken by foreign nations. In the year 1497 Sebastian Cabot, son of a Venetian merchant, resident in Bristol, sailing in the service of Henry VII. of England, navigated to the northern seas of the New World. Adopting the idea of Columbus he sailed in quest of the shores of Cathay, and hoped to find a northwest passage to India. In this voyage he discovered Newfoundland, coasted Labrador to the fifty-sixth degree of north latitude, and then returning ran down southwest to the Floridas, when, his provisions beginning to fail, he returned to England.† But vague and scanty accounts of this voyage exist, which was important as including the first discovery of the northern continent of the New World.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 2. Muñoz, part unpublished.

† Hakluyt's *Collection of Voyages*, vol. iii., p. 7.

The discoveries of rival nations, however, which most excited the attention and jealousy of the Spanish Crown were those of the Portuguese. Vasco de Gama, a man of rank and consummate talent and intrepidity, had at length accomplished the great design of the late Prince Henry of Portugal, and by doubling the Cape of Good Hope in the year 1497, he opened the long-sought-for route to India.

Immediately after Gama's return a fleet of thirteen sail was fitted out to visit the magnificent countries of which he brought accounts. This expedition sailed on the 9th of March, 1500, for Calicut, under the command of Pedro Alvarez de Cabral. Having passed the Cape Verde Islands he sought to avoid the calms prevalent on the coast of Guinea by stretching far to the west. Suddenly, on the 25th of April, he came in sight of land unknown to any one in his squadron; for as yet they had not heard of the discoveries of Pinzon and Lepe. He at first supposed it to be some great island; but after coasting it for some time he became persuaded that it must be part of a continent. Having ranged along it somewhat beyond the fifteenth degree of southern latitude, he landed at a harbor which he called Porto Securo, and taking possession of the country for the Crown of Portugal,

despatched a ship to Lisbon with the important tidings.* In this way did the Brazils come into the possession of Portugal, being to the eastward of the conventional line settled with Spain as the boundaries of their respective territories. Dr. Robertson, in recording this voyage of Cabral, concluded with one of his just and elegant remarks :

"Columbus's discovery of the New World was," he observes, "the effect of an active genius, guided by experience and acting upon a regular plan, executed with no less courage than perseverance. But from this adventure of the Portuguese it appears that chance might have accomplished that great design, which is now the pride of human reason to have formed and perfected. If the sagacity of Columbus had not conducted mankind to America, Cabral, by a fortunate accident, might have led them a few years later to the knowledge of that extensive continent." †

* Lafiteau, *Conquêtes des Portugais*, lib. ii.

† Robinson, *Hist. America*, book ii.

Chapter III.

NICHOLAS DE OVANDO APPOINTED TO SUPERSEDE BOBADILLA.

[1501.]

THE numerous discoveries briefly noticed in the preceding chapter had produced a powerful effect upon the mind of Ferdinand. His ambition, his avarice, and his jealousy were equally inflamed. He beheld boundless regions, teeming with all kinds of riches, daily opening before the enterprises of his subjects; but he beheld at the same time other nations launching forth into competition, emulous for a share of the golden world which he was eager to monopolize. The expeditions of the English and the accidental discovery of the Brazils by the Portuguese caused him much uneasiness. To secure his possession of the continent he determined to establish local governments or commands in the most important places, all to be subject

to a general government, established at San Domingo, which was to be the metropolis.

With these considerations, the government heretofore granted to Columbus had risen vastly in importance; and while the restitution of it was the more desirable in his eyes, it became more and more a matter of repugnance to the selfish and jealous monarch. He had long repented having vested such great powers and prerogatives in any subject, particularly in a foreigner. At the time of granting them he had no anticipation of such boundless countries to be placed under his command. He appeared almost to consider himself outwitted by Columbus in the arrangement; and every succeeding discovery, instead of his grateful sense of the obligation, only made him repine the more at the growing magnitude of the reward. At length, however, the affair of Bobadilla had effected a temporary seclusion of Columbus from his high office, and that without any odium to the Crown, and the wary monarch secretly determined that the door thus closed between him and his dignities should never again be opened.

Perhaps Ferdinand may really have entertained doubts as to the innocence of Columbus with respect to the various charges made against him. He may have doubted also the

sincerity of his loyalty, being a stranger, when he should find himself strong in his command, at a great distance from the parent country, with immense and opulent regions under his control. Columbus himself, in his letters, alludes to reports circulated by his enemies, that he intended either to set up an independent sovereignty or to deliver his discoveries into the hands of other potentates, and he appears to fear that these slanders might have made some impression on the mind of Ferdinand. But there was one other consideration, which had no less force with the monarch in withholding this great act of justice—Columbus was no longer indispensable to him. He had made his great discovery; he had struck out the route to the New World, and now any one could follow it. A number of able navigators had sprung up under his auspices and acquired experience in his voyages. They were daily besieging the throne with offers to fit out expeditions at their own cost, and to yield a share of the profits to the Crown. Why should he therefore confer princely dignities and prerogatives for that which men were daily offering to perform gratuitously?

Such, from his after conduct, appears to have been the jealous and selfish policy which actuated Ferdinand in forbearing to reinstate Co-

lumbus in those dignities and privileges so solemnly granted to him by treaty, and which it was acknowledged he had never forfeited by misconduct.

This deprivation however was declared to be but temporary, and plausible reasons were given for the delay in his reappointment. It was observed that the elements of those violent factions recently in arms against him yet existed in the island; his immediate return might produce fresh exasperation; his personal safety might be endangered, and the island again thrown into confusion. Though Bobadilla therefore was to be immediately dismissed from command, it was deemed advisable to send out some officer of talent and discretion to supersede him, who might dispassionately investigate the recent disorders, remedy the abuses which had arisen, and expel all dissolute and factious persons from the colony. He should hold the government for two years, by which time it was trusted that all angry passions would be allayed and turbulent individuals removed; Columbus might then resume the command with comfort to himself and advantage to the Crown. With these reasons and the promise which accompanied them Columbus was obliged to content himself. There can be no doubt that they were sincere on the

part of Isabella, and that it was her intention to reinstate him in the full enjoyment of his rights and dignities after his apparently necessary suspension. Ferdinand, however, by his subsequent conduct, has forfeited all claim to any favorable opinion of the kind.

The person chosen to supersede Bobadilla was Don Nicholas de Ovando, commander of Lares, of the Order of Alcantara. He is described as of the middle size, fair complexioned, with a red beard and a modest look, yet a tone of authority. He was fluent in speech and gracious and courteous in his manners. A man of great prudence, says Las Casas, and capable of governing many people, but not of governing the Indians, on whom he inflicted incalculable injuries. He possessed great veneration for justice, was an enemy to avarice, sober in his mode of living, and of such humility that when he rose afterwards to be Grand Commander of the Order of Alcantara, he would never allow himself to be addressed by the title of respect attached to it.* Such is the picture drawn of him by historians; but his conduct in several important instances is in direct contradiction to it. He appears to have been plausible and subtle as well as fluent and courteous; his humility concealed a great

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 3.

love of command, and in his transactions with Columbus he was certainly both ungenerous and unjust.

The various arrangements to be made according to the new plan of colonial government delayed for some time the departure of Ovando. In the meantime every arrival brought intelligence of the disastrous state of the island under the mal-administration of Bobadilla. He had commenced his career by an opposite policy to that of Columbus. Imagining that rigorous rule had been the rock on which his predecessors had split, he sought to conciliate the public by all kinds of indulgence. Having at the very outset relaxed the reins of justice and morality, he lost all command over the community; and such disorder and licentiousness ensued that many, even of the opponents of Columbus, looked back with regret upon the strict but wholesome rule of himself and the Adelantado.

Bobadilla was not so much a bad as an imprudent and a weak man. He had not considered the dangerous excesses to which his policy would lead. Rash in grasping authority, he was feeble and temporizing in the exercise of it: he could not look beyond the present exigency. One dangerous indulgence granted to the colonists called for another; each was

ceded in its turn, and thus he went on from error to error,—showing that in government there is as much danger to be apprehended from a weak as from a bad man.

He had sold the farms and estates of the Crown at low prices, observing that it was not the wish of the monarchs to enrich themselves by them, but that they should redound to the profit of their subjects. He granted universal permission to work the mines, exacting only an eleventh of the produce for the Crown. To prevent any diminution in the revenue it became necessary, of course, to increase the quantity of gold collected. He obliged the caciques, therefore, to furnish each Spaniard with Indians to assist him both in the labors of the field and of the mine. To carry this into more complete effect he made an enumeration of the natives of the island, reduced them into classes, and distributed them according to his favor or caprice among the colonists. The latter, at his suggestion, associated themselves in partnerships of two persons each, who were to assist one another with their respective capitals and Indians, one superintending the labors of the field, and the other the search for gold. The only injunction of Bobadilla was to produce large quantities of ore. He had one saying continually in his mouth, which

shows the pernicious and temporizing principle upon which he acted: "Make the most of your time," he would say, "there is no knowing how long it will last," alluding to the possibility of his being speedily recalled. The colonists acted up to his advice, and so hard did they drive the poor natives that the eleventh yielded more revenue to the Crown than had ever been produced by the third under the government of Columbus. In the meantime the unhappy natives suffered under all kinds of cruelties from their inhuman taskmasters. Little used to labor, feeble of constitution, and accustomed in their beautiful and luxuriant island to a life of ease and freedom, they sank under the toils imposed upon them and the severities by which they were enforced. Las Casas gives an indignant picture of the capricious tyranny exercised over the Indians by worthless Spaniards, many of whom had been transported convicts from the dungeons of Castile. These wretches, who in their own countries had been the vilest among the vile, here assumed the tone of grand cavaliers. They insisted upon being attended by trains of servants. They took the daughters and female relations of caciques for their domestics, or rather for their concubines, nor did they limit themselves in number. When they trav-

elled, instead of using the horses and mules with which they were provided, they obliged the natives to transport them upon their shoulders in litters, or hammocks, with others attending to hold umbrellas of palm-leaves over their heads to keep off the sun, and fans of feathers to cool them; and Las Casas affirms that he had seen the backs and shoulders of the unfortunate Indians who bore these litters, raw and bleeding from the task. When these arrogant upstarts arrived at an Indian village they consumed and lavished away the provisions of the inhabitants, seizing upon whatever pleased their caprice, and obliging the cacique and his subjects to dance before them for amusement. Their very pleasures were attended by cruelty. They never addressed the natives but in the most degrading terms, and on the least offence or the least freak of ill-humor, inflicted blows and lashes, and even death itself.*

Such is but a faint picture of the evils which sprang up under the feeble rule of Bobadilla; and are sorrowfully described by Las Casas from actual observation, as he visited the island just at the close of his administration. Bobadilla had trusted to the immense amount of gold wrung from the miseries of the natives,

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 1, MS.

to atone for all errors and secure favor with the sovereigns; but he had totally mistaken his course. The abuses of his government soon reached the royal ear and above all, the wrongs of the natives reached the benevolent heart of Isabella. Nothing was more calculated to arouse her indignation, and she urged the speedy departure of Ovando, to put a stop to these enormities.

In conformity to the plan already mentioned, the government of Ovando extended over the islands and Terra Firma, of which Hispaniola was to be the metropolis. He was to enter upon the exercise of his powers immediately upon his arrival, by procuration, sending home Bobadilla by the return of the fleet. He was instructed to inquire diligently into the late abuses, punishing the delinquents without favor or partiality, and removing all worthless persons from the island. He was to revoke immediately the license granted by Bobadilla for the general search after gold, it having been given without royal authority. He was to require for the Crown a third of what was already collected, and one half of all that should be collected in future. He was empowered to build towns, granting them the privileges enjoyed by municipal corporations of Spain, and obliging the Spaniards, and

particularly the soldiers, to reside in them, instead of scattering themselves over the island. Among many sage provisions, there were others injurious and illiberal, characteristic of an age when the principles of commerce were but little understood, but which were continued by Spain long after the rest of the world had discarded them as the errors of dark and unenlightened times. The Crown monopolized the trade of the colonies. No one could carry merchandise there on his own account. A royal factor was appointed, through whom alone were to be obtained supplies of European articles. The Crown reserved to itself not only exclusive property in mines, but in precious stones, and like objects of extraordinary value, and also in dye-woods. No strangers, and above all, no Moors, nor Jews, were permitted to establish themselves in the island, nor to go upon voyages of discovery. Such were some of the restrictions upon trade which Spain imposed upon her colonies, and which were followed up by others equally illiberal. Her commercial policy has been the scoff of modern times; but may not the present restrictions on trade, imposed by the most intelligent nations, be equally the wonder and the jest of future ages?

Isabella was particularly careful in providing

for the kind treatment of the Indians. Ovando was ordered to assemble the caçiques, and declare to them that the sovereigns took them and their people under their especial protection. They were merely to pay tribute like other subjects of the Crown, and it was to be collected with the utmost mildness and gentleness. Great pains were to be taken in their religious instruction; for which purpose twelve Franciscan friars were sent out, with a prelate named Antonio de Espinal, a venerable and pious man. This was the first formal introduction of the Franciscan order into the New World.*

All these precautions with respect to the natives were defeated by one unwary provision. It was permitted that the Indians might be compelled to work in the mines, and in other employments; but this was limited to the royal service. They were to be engaged as hired laborers, and punctually paid. This provision led to great abuses and oppressions, and was ultimately as fatal to the natives as could have been the most absolute slavery.

But, with that inconsistency frequent in human conduct, while the sovereigns were making regulations for the relief of the Indians, they encouraged a gross invasion of the rights and welfare of another race of human beings.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 3, MS.

Among their various decrees on this occasion, we find the first trace of negro slavery in the New World. It was permitted to carry to the colony negro slaves born among Christians*; that is to say, slaves born in Seville and other parts of Spain, the children and descendants of natives brought from the Atlantic coast of Africa, where such traffic had for some time been carried on by the Spaniards and Portuguese. There are signal events in the course of history which sometimes bear the appearance of temporal judgments. It is a fact worthy of observation, that Hispaniola, the place where this flagrant sin against nature and humanity was first introduced into the New World, has been the first to exhibit an awful retribution.

Amidst the various concerns which claimed the attention of the sovereigns, the interests of Columbus were not forgotten. Ovando was ordered to examine into all his accounts, without undertaking to pay them off. He was to ascertain the damages he had sustained by his imprisonment, the interruption of his privileges, and the confiscation of his effects. All the property confiscated by Bobadilla was to be restored; or if it had been sold, to be made good. If it had been employed in the royal service, Columbus was to be indemnified out

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 12.

of the treasury; if Bobadilla had appropriated it to his own use, he was to account for it out of his private purse. Equal care was to be taken to indemnify the brothers of the Admiral for the losses they had wrongfully suffered by their arrest.

Columbus was likewise to receive the arrears of his revenues; and the same were to be punctually paid to him in future. He was permitted to have a factor resident in the island, to be present at the melting and the marking of the gold, to collect his dues, and, in short, to attend to all his affairs. To this office he appointed Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal; and the sovereigns commanded that his agent should be treated with great respect.

The fleet appointed to convey Ovando to his government was the largest that had yet sailed to the New World. It consisted of thirty sail, five of them, from ninety to one hundred and fifty tons burden, twenty-four caravels from thirty to ninety, and one bark of twenty-five tons.* The number of souls embarked in this fleet was about twenty-five hundred; many of them persons of rank and distinction, with their families.

* Muñoz, part unpublished. Las Casas says the fleet consisted of thirty-two sail. He states from memory, however; Muñoz from documents.

That Ovando might appear with dignity in his new office, he was allowed to use silks, brocades, precious stones, and other articles of sumptuous attire, prohibited at that time in Spain, in consequence of the ruinous ostentation of the nobility. He was permitted to have seventy-two esquires as his body-guard, ten of whom were horsemen. With this expedition sailed Don Alonzo Maldonado, appointed as alguazil mayor or chief justice in place of Roldan, who was to be sent to Spain. There were artisans of various kinds: to these were added a physician, surgeon, and apothecary, and seventy-three married men* with their families, all of respectable character, destined to be distributed in four towns, and to enjoy peculiar privileges, that they might form the basis of a sound and useful population. They were to displace an equal number of the idle and dissolute who were to be sent from the island. This excellent measure had been especially urged and entreated by Columbus. There were also livestock, artillery, arms, munitions of all kinds, everything, in short, that was required for the supply of the island.

Such was the style in which Ovando, a favorite of Ferdinand and a native subject of rank,

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, part unpublished.

was fitted out to enter upon the government withheld from Columbus. The fleet put to sea on the 13th of February, 1502. In the early part of the voyage it was encountered by a terrible storm; one of the ships foundered, with one hundred and twenty passengers; the others were obliged to throw overboard everything on deck, and were completely scattered. The shores of Spain were strewed with articles from the fleet, and a rumor spread that all the ships had perished. When this reached the sovereigns they were so overcome with grief that they shut themselves up for eight days, and admitted no one to their presence. The rumor proved to be incorrect: but one ship was lost. The others assembled again at the island of Gomera in the Canaries, and pursuing their voyage, arrived at San Domingo on the 15th of April.*

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 3, MS.

Chapter IV.

PROPOSITION OF COLUMBUS RELATIVE TO THE RECOVERY OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

[1500–1501.]

COLUMBUS remained in the city of Granada upwards of nine months, endeavoring to extricate his affairs from the confusion into which they had been thrown by the rash conduct of Bobadilla, and soliciting the restoration of his offices and dignities. During this time he constantly experienced the smiles and attentions of the sovereigns, and promises were repeatedly made him that he should ultimately be reinstated in all his honors. He had long since, however, ascertained the great interval that may exist between promise and performance in a court. Had he been of a morbid and repining spirit, he had ample food for misanthropy. He beheld the career of glory which he had opened thronged by favored ad-

venturers; he witnessed preparations making to convey with unusual pomp a successor to that government from which he had been so wrongfully and rudely ejected—in the meanwhile his own career was interrupted, and as far as public employ is a guage of royal favor, he remained apparently in disgrace.

His sanguine temperament was not long to be depressed; if checked in one direction, it broke forth in another. His visionary imagination was an internal light, which, in the darkest times repelled all outward gloom and filled his mind with splendid images and glorious speculations. In this time of evil, his vow to furnish within seven years from the time of his discovery, fifty thousand foot-soldiers and five thousand horse, for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, recurred to his memory with peculiar force. The time had elapsed, but the vow remained unfulfilled, and the means to perform it had failed him. The New World, with all its treasures, had as yet produced expense instead of profit, and so far from being in a situation to set armies on foot by his own contributions, he found himself without property, without power, and without employ.

Destitute of the means of accomplishing his pious intentions, he considered it his duty to

incite the sovereigns to the enterprise, and he felt emboldened to do so, from having originally proposed it as the great object to which the profits of his discoveries should be dedicated. He set to work, therefore, with his accustomed zeal, to prepare arguments for the purpose. During the intervals of business, he sought into the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Fathers, and all kinds of sacred and speculative sources, for mystic portents and revelations which might be construed to bear upon the discovery of the New World, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre—three great events which he supposed to be predestined to succeed each other. These passages, with the assistance of a Carthusian friar, he arranged in order, illustrated by poetry, and collected into a manuscript volume, to be delivered to the sovereigns. He prepared, at the same time, a long letter written with his usual fervor of spirit and simplicity of heart. It is one of those singular compositions which lay open the visionary part of his character, and show the mystic and speculative reading with which he was accustomed to nurture his solemn and soaring imagination.

In this letter he urged the sovereigns to set on foot a crusade for the deliverance of Jeru-

salem from the power of the unbelievers. He entreated them not to reject his present advice as extravagant and impracticable, nor to heed the discredit that might be cast upon it by others, reminding them that his great scheme of discovery had originally been treated with similar contempt. He avowed in the fullest manner his persuasion, that, from his earliest infancy, he had been chosen by Heaven for the accomplishment of those two great designs, the discovery of the New World and the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre. For this purpose, in his tender years, he had been guided by a divine impulse to embrace the profession of the sea, a mode of life, he observes, which produces an inclination to inquire into the mysteries of nature; and he had been gifted with a curious spirit, to read all kinds of chronicles, geographical treatises, and works of philosophy. In meditating upon these, his understanding had been opened by the Deity, "as with a palpable hand," so as to discover the navigation to the Indies, and he had been inflamed with ardor to undertake the enterprise.

"Animated as by a heavenly fire," he adds, "I came to your highnesses: all who heard of my enterprise mocked at it; all the sciences I had acquired profited me nothing; seven years did I pass in your

royal court, disputing the case with persons of great authority and learned in all the arts, and in the end they decided that all was vain. In your highnesses alone remained faith and constancy. Who will doubt that this light was from the Holy Scriptures, illuming you as well as myself with rays of marvellous brightness?"

These ideas, so repeatedly, and solemnly, and artlessly expressed, by a man of the fervent piety of Columbus, show how truly his discovery arose from the working of his own mind, and not from information furnished by others. He considered it a divine intimation, a light from Heaven, and the fulfilment of what had been foretold by our Saviour and the prophets. Still he regarded it but as a minor event, preparatory to the great enterprise, the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. He pronounced it a miracle effected by Heaven, to animate himself and others to that holy undertaking; and he assured the sovereigns that, if they had faith in his present as in his former proposition, they would assuredly be rewarded with equally triumphant success. He conjured them not to heed the sneers of those that might scoff at him as one unlearned, as an ignorant mariner, a worldly man; reminding them that the Holy Spirit works not merely in the learned, but also in the ignorant; nay,

that it reveals things to come, not merely by rational beings, but by prodigies in animals, and by mystic signs in the air and in the heavens.

The enterprise here suggested by Columbus, however idle and extravagant it may appear in the present day, was in unison with the temper of the times, and of the court to which it was proposed. The vein of mystic erudition by which it was enforced, likewise, was suited to an age when the reveries of the cloister still controlled the operations of the cabinet and the camp. The spirit of the crusades had not yet passed away. In the cause of the Church, and at the instigation of its dignitaries, every cavalier was ready to draw his sword; and religion mingled a glowing and devoted enthusiasm with the ordinary excitement of warfare. Ferdinand was a religious bigot; and the devotion of Isabella went as near to bigotry as her liberal mind and magnanimous spirit would permit. Both the sovereigns were under the influence of ecclesiastical politicians, constantly guiding their enterprises in a direction to redound to the temporal power and glory of the Church. The recent conquest of Granada had been considered a European crusade, and had gained to the sovereigns the epithet of Catholic. It was

natural to think of extending their sacred victories still further, and retaliating upon the Infidels their domination of Spain and their long triumphs over the cross. In fact, the Duke of Medina Sidonia had made a recent inroad into Barbary, in the course of which he had taken the city of Melilla, and his expedition had been pronounced a renewal of the holy wars against the Infidels in Africa.*

There was nothing therefore in the proposition of Columbus that could be regarded as preposterous, considering the period and circumstances in which it was made, though it strongly illustrates his own enthusiastic and visionary character. It must be recollected that it was meditated in the courts of the Alhambra, among the splendid remains of Moorish grandeur, where but a few years before he had beheld the standard of the Faith elevated in triumph above the symbols of infidelity. It appears to have been the offspring of one of those moods of high excitement,

* Garibay, *Hist. España*, lib. xix., cap. 6. Among the collections existing in the library of the late Prince Sebastian, there is a folio which, among other things, contains a paper or letter, in which is a calculation of the probable expenses of an army of twenty thousand men, for the conquest of the Holy Land. It is dated in 1509 or 1510, and the handwriting appears to be of the same time.

when, as has been observed, his soul was elevated by the contemplation of his great and glorious office; when he considered himself under divine inspiration, imparting the will of Heaven, and fulfilling the high and holy purposes for which he had been predestined.*

* Columbus was not singular in this belief; it was entertained by many of his zealous and learned admirers. The erudite lapidary, Jayme Ferrer, in the letter written to Columbus, in 1495, at the command of the sovereigns, observes: "I see in this a great mystery; the divine and infallible Providence sent the great St. Thomas from the west into the east, to manifest in India our holy and Catholic faith; and you, Señor, he sent in an opposite direction, from the east into the west, until you have arrived in the Orient, into the extreme part of Upper India, that the people may hear that which their ancestors neglected of the preaching of St. Thomas. Thus shall be accomplished what was written, *in omnem terram exhibit sonus eorum.*" And again, "The office which you hold, Señor, places you in the light of an apostle and ambassador of God, sent by his divine judgment, to make known his holy name in unknown lands."—*Letra de Mossen Jayme Ferrer*, Navarrete, *Coleccion*, tom. ii., decad. 68. See also the opinion expressed by Agostino Giustiniani, his contemporary, in his *Polyglot Psalter.*

Chapter V.

PREPARATIONS OF COLUMBUS FOR A FOURTH VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

[1501–1502.]

THE speculation relative to the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre held but a temporary sway over the mind of Columbus. His thoughts soon returned, with renewed ardor, to their wonted channel. He became impatient of inaction, and soon conceived a leading object for another enterprise of discovery. The achievement of Vasco de Gama, of the long-attempted navigation of India by the Cape of Good Hope, was one of the signal events of the day. Pedro Alvarez Cabral, following in his track, had made a most successful voyage, and returned with his vessels laden with the precious commodities of the East. The riches of Calicut were now the theme of every tongue, and splendid trade now opened in diamonds and precious stones

from the mines of Hindostan; in pearls, gold, silver, amber, ivory, and porcelain; in silken stuffs, costly woods, gums, aromatics, and spices of all kinds. The discoveries of the savage regions of the New World, as yet brought little revenue to Spain; but this route, suddenly opened to the luxurious countries of the East, was pouring immediate wealth into Portugal.

Columbus was roused to emulation by these accounts. He now conceived the idea of a voyage, in which, with his usual enthusiasm, he hoped to surpass not merely the discoveries of Vasco de Gama, but even those of his own previous expeditions. According to his own observations in his voyage to Paria, and the reports of other navigators, who had pursued the same route to a greater distance, it appeared that the coast of Terra Firma stretched far to the west. The southern coast of Cuba, which he considered part of the Asiatic continent, stretched onward towards the same point. The currents of the Caribbean Sea must pass between those lands. He was persuaded, therefore, that there must be a strait existing somewhere thereabouts, opening into the Indian sea. The situation in which he placed his conjectural strait, was somewhere about what at present is called the Isthmus of Da-

rien.* Could he but discover such a passage, and thus link the New World he had discovered, with the opulent Oriental region of the old, he felt that he should make a magnificent close to his labors, and consummate this great object of his existence.

When he unfolded his plan to the sovereigns it was listened to with great attention. Certain of the royal council, it is said, endeavored to throw difficulties in the way; observing that the various exigencies of the times, and the low state of the royal treasury, rendered any new expedition highly inexpedient. They intimated also that Columbus ought not to be employed, until his good conduct in Hispaniola was satisfactorily established by letters from Ovando. These narrow-minded suggestions failed in their aim: Isabella had implicit confidence in the integrity of Columbus. As to the expense, she felt that while furnishing so powerful a fleet and splendid retinue to Ovando, to take possession of his government, it would be ungenerous and ungrateful to refuse a few ships to the discoverer of the New World, to enable him to prosecute his illustrious enterprises. As to Ferdinand, his cupidity was roused at the idea of being soon put in posses-

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 4. Las Casas specifies the vicinity of Nombre de Dios as the place.

sion of a more direct and safe route to those countries with which the Crown of Portugal was opening so lucrative a trade. The project also would occupy the Admiral for a considerable time, and while it diverted him from claims of an inconvenient nature, would employ his talents in a way most beneficial to the Crown. However the King might doubt his abilities as a legislator, he had the highest opinion of his skill and judgment as a navigator. If such a strait as the one supposed were really in existence, Columbus was of all men in the world the one to discover it. His proposition therefore was promptly acceded to; he was authorized to fit out an armament immediately; and repaired to Seville in the autumn of 1501, to make the necessary preparations.

Though this substantial enterprise diverted his attention from his romantic expedition for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, it still continued to haunt his mind. He left his manuscript collection of researches among the prophecies, in the hands of a devout friar of the name of Gaspar Gorricio, who assisted to complete it. In February also he wrote a letter to Pope Alexander VII., in which he apologizes, on account of indispensable occupations, for not having repaired to Rome, according to his original intention, to give an account of his

grand discoveries. After briefly relating them, he adds that his enterprises had been undertaken with the intent of dedicating the gains to the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. He mentions his vow to furnish within seven years fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse for the purpose, and another of like force within five succeeding years. This pious intention he laments had been impeded by the arts of the devil, and he feared without divine aid would be entirely frustrated, as the government which had been granted to him in perpetuity had been taken from him. He informs His Holiness of his being about to embark on another voyage, and promises solemnly on his return to repair to Rome without delay, to relate everything by word of mouth, as well as to present him with an account of his voyages, which he had kept from the commencement to the present time, in the style of the Commentaries of Cæsar.*

It was about this time also that he sent his letter on the subject of the Sepulchre to the sovereigns, together with the collection of prophecies.† We have no account of the man-

* Navarrete, *Colec. Viag.*, tom. ii., p. 145.

† A manuscript volume containing a copy of this letter and of the collection of prophecies is in the Columbian Library, in the Cathedral of Seville, where

ner in which the proposition was received. Ferdinand with all his bigotry was a shrewd and worldly prince. Instead of a chivalrous crusade against Jerusalem, he preferred making a pacific arrangement with the Grand Soldan

the author of this work has seen and examined it, since publishing the first edition. The title and some of the early pages of the work are in the handwriting of Fernando Columbus, the main body of the work is by a strange hand, probably by the Friar Gaspar Gorricio, or some brother of his convent. There are trifling marginal notes or corrections, and one or two trivial additions in the handwriting of Columbus, especially a passage added after his return from his fourth voyage and shortly before his death, alluding to an eclipse of the moon which took place during his sojourn in the island of Jamaica. The handwriting of this last passage, like most of the manuscripts of Columbus, which the author has seen, is small and delicate, but wants the firmness and distinctness of his earlier writing, his hand having doubtless become unsteady by age and infirmity.

This document is extremely curious, as containing all the passages of Scripture and the works of the Fathers which had so powerful an influence on the enthusiastic mind of Columbus, and were construed by him into mysterious prophecies and revelations. The volume is in good preservation, excepting that a few pages have been cut out. The writing, though of the beginning of the fifteenth century, is very distinct and legible. The library mark of the book is Estante Z., Tab. 138, No. 25.

of Egypt, who had menaced the destruction of the sacred edifice. He despatched therefore the learned Peter Martyr, so distinguished for his historical writings, as ambassador to the Soldan, by whom all ancient grievances between the two powers were satisfactorily adjusted and arrangements made for the conservation of the Holy Sepulchre and the protection of all Christian pilgrims resorting to it.

In the meantime Columbus went on with the preparations for his contemplated voyage, though but slowly, owing, as Charlevoix intimates, to the artifices and delays of Fonseca and his agents. He craved permission to touch at the island of Hispaniola for supplies on his outward voyage. This however the sovereigns forbade, knowing that he had many enemies in the island, and that the place would be in great agitation from the arrival of Ovando, and the removal of Bobadilla. They consented however that he should touch there briefly on his return, by which time they hoped the island would be restored to tranquillity. He was permitted to take with him, in this expedition, his brother the Adelantado and his son Fernando, then in his fourteenth year; also, two or three persons learned in Arabic, to serve as interpreters, in case he should arrive at the dominions of the Grand Khan, or of any other

Eastern prince where that language might be spoken, or partially known. In reply to letters relative to the ultimate restoration of his rights, and to matters concerning his family, the sovereigns wrote him a letter, dated March 14, 1502, from Valencia de Torre, in which they again solemnly assured him that their capitulations with him should be fulfilled to the letter, and the dignities therein ceded enjoyed by him, and his children after him; and if it should be necessary to confirm them anew, they would do so, and secure them to his son. Beside which they expressed their disposition to bestow further honors and rewards upon himself, his brothers, and his children. They entreated him therefore to depart in peace and confidence, and to leave all his concerns in Spain to the management of his son Diego.*

This was the last letter that Columbus received from the sovereigns, and the assurances it contained were as ample and absolute as he could desire. Recent circumstances however had apparently rendered him dubious of the future. During the time that he passed in Seville, previous to his departure, he took measures to secure his fame, and preserve the claims of his family, by placing them under the guardianship of his native country. He

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 4.

had copies of all the letters, grants, and privileges from the sovereigns, appointing him Admiral, viceroy, and governor of the Indies copied and authenticated before the alcaldes of Seville. Two sets of these were transcribed, together with his letter to the nurse of Prince Juan, containing a circumstantial and eloquent vindication of his rights; and two letters to the Bank of St. George, at Genoa, assigning to it the tenth of his revenues, to be employed in diminishing the duties on corn and other provisions,—a truly benevolent and patriotic donation intended for the relief of the poor of his native city. These two sets of documents* he sent by different individuals to his friend Dr. Nicolo Oderigo, formerly ambassador from Genoa to the court of Spain, requesting him to preserve them in some safe deposit, and to apprise his son Diego of the same. His dissatisfaction at the conduct of the Spanish court may have been the cause of this precautionary meas-

* These documents lay unknown in the Oderigo family until 1670, when Lorenzo Oderigo presented them to the government of Genoa, and they were deposited in the archives. In the disturbances and revolutions of after times, one of these copies was taken to Paris, and the other disappeared. In 1816 the latter was discovered in the library of the deceased Count Michael Angelo Cambiaso, a senator of Genoa. It was procured by the King of Sardinia, then sovereign of

ure, that an appeal to the world, or to posterity, might be in the power of his descendants, in case he should perish in the course of his voyage.

Genoa, and given up by him to the city of Genoa in 1821. A *custodia*, or monument, was erected in that city for its preservation, consisting of a marble column supporting an urn, surmounted by a bust of Columbus. The documents were deposited in the urn. These papers have been published, together with an historical memoir of Columbus, by D. Gio. Battista Spotorna, Professor of Eloquence, etc., in the University of Genoa.

Book IV.

Chapter I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS FOURTH VOYAGE—REFUSED ADMISSION TO THE HARBOR OF SAN DOMINGO—EXPOSED TO A VIOLENT TEMPEST.

[1502.]

AGE was rapidly making its advances upon Columbus when he undertook his fourth and last voyage of discovery. He had already numbered sixty-six years, and they were years filled with care and trouble, in which age outstrips the march of time. His constitution, originally vigorous in the extreme, had been impaired by hardships and exposure in every clime, and silently preyed upon by the sufferings of the mind. His frame, once powerful and commanding, and retaining a semblance of strength and majesty even in its decay, was yet crazed by infirmities, and subject to paroxysms of excruciating pain. His intellectual forces alone

retained their wonted health and energy, prompting him, at a period of life when most men seek repose, to sally forth with youthful ardor, on the most toilsome and adventurous of expeditions.

His squadron for the present voyage consisted of four caravels, the smallest of fifty tons burden, the largest not exceeding seventy, and the crews amounting in all to one hundred and fifty men. With this little armament and these slender barks did the venerable discoverer undertake the search after a strait, which, if found, must conduct him into the most remote seas, and lead to a complete circumnavigation of the globe.

In this arduous voyage, however, he had a faithful counsellor, and an intrepid and vigorous coadjutor, in his brother Don Bartholomew, while his younger son Fernando cheered him with his affectionate sympathy. He had learned to appreciate such comforts, from being too often an isolated stranger, surrounded by false friends and perfidious enemies.

The squadron sailed from Cadiz on the 9th of May, and passed over to Ercilla, on the coast of Morocco, where it anchored on the 13th. Understanding that the Portuguese garrison was closely besieged in the fortress by the Moors, and exposed to great peril, Colum-

bus was ordered to touch there, and render all the assistance in his power. Before his arrival the siege had been raised, but the governor lay ill, having been wounded in an assault. Columbus sent his brother, the Adelantado, his son Fernando, and the captains of the caravels on shore, to wait upon the governor, with expressions of friendship and civility, and offers of the services of his squadron. Their visit and message gave high satisfaction, and several cavaliers were sent to wait upon the Admiral in return, some of whom were relatives of his deceased wife, Doña Felipa Moñis. After this exchange of civilities, the Admiral made sail on the same day, and continued his voyage.* On the 25th of May he arrived at the Grand Canary, and remained at that and adjacent islands for a few days, taking in wood and water. On the evening of the 25th he took his departure for the New World. The trade winds were so favorable that his little squadron swept gently on its course, without shifting a sail, and arrived on the 15th of June at one of the Caribbee Islands, called by the natives Mantinino.† After stopping

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 88.

† Señor Navarrete supposes this island to be the same at present called Santa Lucia. From the distance between it and Dominica, as stated by Fer-

here for three days, to take in wood and water, and allow the seamen time to wash their clothes, the squadron passed to the west of the island, and sailed to Dominica, about ten leagues distant.* Columbus continued hence along the inside of the Antilles, to Santa Cruz, then along the south side of Porto Rico, and steered for San Domingo. This was contrary to the original plan of the Admiral, who had intended to steer to Jamaica,† and thence to take a departure for the continent, and explore its coast in search of the supposed strait. It was contrary to the orders of the sovereigns also, prohibiting him on his outward voyage to touch at Hispaniola. His excuse was that his principal vessel sailed extremely ill, could not carry any canvas, and continually embarrassed and delayed the rest of the squadron.‡ He wished therefore to exchange it for one of the fleet which had recently conveyed Ovando to his government, or to purchase some other vessel at San Domingo; and he was per-

nando Columbus, it was more probably the present Martinica.

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 88.

† Letter of Columbus from Jamacia. *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, tom. i.

‡ *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 88. Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 5.

suaded that he would not be blamed for departing from his orders, in a case of such importance to the safety and success of his expedition.

It is necessary to state the situation of the island at this moment. Ovando had reached San Domingo on the 15th of April. He had been received with the accustomed ceremony on the shore, by Bobadilla, accompanied by the principal inhabitants of the town. He was escorted to the fortress, where his commission was read in form, in presence of all the authorities. The usual oaths were taken, and ceremonials observed; and the new governor was hailed with great demonstrations of obedience and satisfaction. Ovando entered upon the duties of his office with coolness and prudence, and treated Bobadilla with a courtesy totally opposite to the rudeness with which the latter had superseded Columbus. The emptiness of mere official rank, when unsustained by merit, was shown in the case of Bobadilla. The moment his authority was at an end, all his importance vanished. He found himself a solitary and neglected man, deserted by those whom he had most favored, and he experienced the worthlessness of the popularity gained by courting the prejudices and passions of the multitude. Still there is no record of any

suit having been instituted against him ; and Las Casas, who was on the spot, declared that he never heard any harsh thing spoken of him by the colonists.*

The conduct of Roldan and his accomplices, however, underwent a strict investigation, and many were arrested to be sent to Spain for trial. They appeared undismayed, trusting to the influence of their friends in Spain to protect them, and many relying on the well-known disposition of the Bishop of Fonseca to favor all who had been opposed to Columbus.

The fleet which had brought out Ovando, was now ready for sea, and was to take out a number of the principal delinquents, and many of the idlers and profligates of the island. Bobadilla was to embark in the principal ship, on board of which he put an immense amount of gold, the revenue collected for the Crown during his government, and which he confidently expected would atone for all his faults. There was one solid mass of virgin gold on board of his ship, which is famous in the old Spanish chronicles. It had been found by a female Indian in a brook, on the estate of Francisco de Garay and Miguel Diaz, and had been taken by Bobadilla to send to the King, making the owners a suitable compensation.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap.3.

It was said to weigh three thousand six hundred *castellanos*.*

Large quantities of gold were likewise shipped in the fleet by the followers of Roldan and other adventurers,—the wealth gained by the sufferings of the unhappy natives. Among the various persons who were to sail in the principal ship, was the unfortunate Guarionex, the once powerful cacique of the Vega. He had been confined in Fort Conception ever since his capture after the war of Higuey, and was now to be sent a captive in chains to Spain. In one of the ships, Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the agent of Columbus, had put four thousand pieces of gold, to be remitted to him; being part of his property, either recently collected or recovered from the hands of Bobadilla.†

The preparations were all made, and the fleet was ready to put to sea, when, on the 29th of June, the squadron of Columbus arrived at the mouth of the river. He immediately sent Pedro de Terreros, captain of one of the caravels, on shore, to wait on Ovando, and explain to him that the purpose of his coming was to procure a vessel in exchange for one of his caravels, which was extremely defective. He requested permission also to shelter his squad-

* Las Casas, cap. 5. † *Ibid.*

ron in the harbor, as he apprehended from various indications an approaching storm. This request was refused by Ovando. Las Casas thinks it probable that he had instructions from the sovereigns not to admit Columbus, and that he was further swayed by prudent considerations, as San Domingo was at that moment crowded with the most virulent enemies of the Admiral, many of them in a high state of exasperation, from recent proceedings which had taken place against them.*

When the ungracious refusal of Ovando was brought to Columbus, and he found all shelter denied him, he sought at least to avert the danger of the fleet, which was about to sail. He sent back the officer, therefore, to the governor, entreating him not to permit the fleet to put to sea for several days; assuring him that there were indubitable signs of an impending tempest. This second request was equally fruitless with the first. The weather, to an inexperienced eye, was fair and tranquil; the pilots and seamen were impatient to depart. They scoffed at the prediction of the Admiral, ridiculing him as a false prophet, and they persuaded Ovando not to detain the fleet on so unsubstantial a pretext.

It was hard treatment of Columbus, thus to

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

be denied the relief which the state of his ships required, and to be excluded in time of distress from the very harbor he had discovered. He retired from the river full of grief and indignation. His crew murmured loudly at being shut out from a port of their own nation, where even strangers, under similar circumstances, would be admitted. They repined at having embarked with a commander liable to such treatment; and anticipated nothing but evil from a voyage in which they were exposed to the dangers of the sea, and repulsed from the protection of the land.

Being confident, from his observations of those natural phenomena in which he was deeply skilled, that the anticipated storm could not be distant, and expecting it from the land side, Columbus kept his feeble squadron close to the shore, and sought for secure anchorage in some wild bay or river of the island.

In the meantime, the fleet of Bobadilla set sail from San Domingo, and stood out confidently to sea. Within two days, the predictions of Columbus were verified. One of those tremendous hurricanes, which sometimes sweep those latitudes, had gradually gathered up. The baleful appearance of the heavens, the wild look of the ocean, the rising murmur of the winds, all gave notice of its approach.

The fleet had scarcely reached the eastern point of Hispaniola, when the tempest burst over it with awful fury, involving everything in wreck and ruin. The ship, on board of which were Bobadilla, Roldan, and a number of the most inveterate enemies of Columbus, was swallowed up with all its crew, and with the celebrated mass of gold, and the principal part of the ill-gotten treasure, gained by the miseries of the Indians. Many of the ships were entirely lost, some returned to San Domingo, in shattered condition, and only one was enabled to continue her voyage to Spain. That one, according to Fernando Columbus, was the weakest of the fleet, and had on board the four thousand pieces of gold, the property of the Admiral.

During the early part of the storm, the little squadron of Columbus remained tolerably well sheltered by the land. On the second day the tempest increased in violence, and the night coming on with unusual darkness, the ships lost sight of each other and were separated. The Admiral still kept close to the shore, and sustained no damage. The others, fearful of the land in such a dark and boisterous night, ran out for sea-room, and encountered the whole fury of the elements. For several days they were driven about at the mercy of wind

and wave, fearful each moment of shipwreck, and giving each other up as lost. The Adelantado, who commanded the ship already mentioned as being scarcely seaworthy, ran the most imminent hazard, and nothing but his consummate seamanship enabled him to keep her afloat. At length, after various vicissitudes, they all arrived safe at Port Hermoso, west of San Domingo. The Adelantado had lost his long boat; and all the vessels, with the exception of that of the Admiral, had sustained more or less injury.

When Columbus learnt the signal destruction that had overwhelmed his enemies, almost before his eyes, he was deeply impressed with awe, and considered his own preservation as little less than miraculous. Both his son Fernando and the venerable historian Las Casas looked upon the event as one of those awful judgments which seem at times to deal forth temporal retribution. They noticed the circumstance, that while the enemies of the Admiral were swallowed up by the raging sea, the only ship of the fleet which was enabled to pursue her voyage, and reach her port of destination, was the frail bark freighted with the property of Columbus. The evil, however, in this, as in most circumstances, overwhelmed the innocent as well as the guilty.

In the ship with Bobadilla and Roldan, perished the captive Guarionex, the unfortunate cacique of the Vega.*

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 5. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 88.

Chapter II.

VOYAGE ALONG THE COAST OF HONDURAS.

[1502.]

FOR several days Columbus remained in Port Hermoso to repair his vessels, and permit his crews to repose and refresh themselves after the late tempest. He had scarcely left this harbor, when he was obliged to take shelter from another storm in Jacquemel, or as it was called by the Spaniards, Port Brazil. Hence he sailed on the 14th of July, steering for Terra Firma. The weather falling perfectly calm, he was borne away by the currents until he found himself in the vicinity of some little islands near Jamaica,* destitute of springs, but where the seamen obtained a supply of water by digging holes in the sand on the beach.

The calm continuing, he was swept away to

* Supposed to be the Morant Keys.

the group of small islands, or keys, on the southern coast of Cuba, to which in 1494, he had given the name of The Gardens. He had scarcely touched there however when the wind sprang up from a favorable quarter, and he was enabled to make sail on his destined course. He now stood to the southwest, and after a few days discovered, on the 30th of July, a small but elevated island, agreeable to the eye from the variety of trees with which it was covered. Among these was a great number of lofty pines, from which circumstance Columbus named it Isle de Pinos. It has always however retained its Indian name of Guanaja,* which has been extended to a number of smaller islands surrounding it. This group is within a few leagues of the coast of Honduras, to the east of the great bay or gulf of that name.

The Adelantado, with two launches full of people, landed on the principal island, which was extremely verdant and fertile. The inhabitants resembled those of other islands, excepting that their foreheads were narrower. While the Adelantado was on shore he beheld a great canoe arriving, as from a distant and important voyage. He was struck with its magnitude and contents. It was eight feet

* Called in some of the English maps Bonacca.

wide and as long as a galley, though formed of the trunk of a single tree. In the centre was a kind of awning or cabin of palm-leaves, after the manner of those in the gondolas of Venice, and sufficiently close to exclude both sun and rain. Under this sat a cacique with his wives and children. Twenty-five Indians rowed the canoe, and it was filled with all kinds of articles of the manufacture and natural production of the adjacent countries. It is supposed that this bark had come from the province of Yucatan, which is about forty leagues distant from this island.

The Indians in the canoe appeared to have no fear of the Spaniards, and readily went alongside of the Admiral's caravel. Columbus was overjoyed at thus having brought to him at once, without trouble or danger, a collection of specimens of all the important articles of this part of the New World. He examined with great curiosity and interest the contents of the canoe. Among various utensils and weapons similar to those already found among the natives he perceived others of a much superior kind. There were hatchets for cutting wood, formed not of stone but copper; wooden swords, with channels on each side of the blade, in which sharp flints were firmly fixed by cords made of the intestines of fishes—

being the same kind of weapon afterwards found among the Mexicans. There were copper bells and other articles of the same metal, together with a rude kind of crucible in which to melt it; various vessels and utensils neatly formed of clay, of marble, and of hard wood; sheets and mantles of cotton, worked and dyed with various colors; great quantities of cacao, a fruit as yet unknown to the Spaniards, but which, as they soon found, the natives held in great estimation, using it both as food and money. There was a beverage also extracted from maize or Indian corn, resembling beer. Their provisions consisted of bread made of maize, and roots of various kinds, similar to those of Hispaniola. From among these articles, Columbus collected such as were important to send as specimens to Spain, giving the natives European trinkets in exchange, with which they were highly satisfied. They appeared to manifest neither astonishment nor alarm when on board of the vessels, and surrounded by people who must have been so strange and wonderful to them. The women wore mantles, with which they wrapped themselves, like the female Moors of Granada, and the men had cloths of cotton round their loins. Both sexes appeared more particular about these coverings, and to have a quicker sense

of personal modesty than any Indians Columbus had yet discovered.

These circumstances, together with the superiority of their implements and manufactures, were held by the Admiral as indications that he was approaching more civilized nations. He endeavored to gain particular information from these Indians about the surrounding countries; but as they spoke a different language from that of his interpreters he could understand them but imperfectly. They informed him that they had just arrived from a country rich, cultivated, and industrious, situated to the west. They endeavored to impress him with an idea of the wealth and magnificence of the regions, and the people in that quarter, and urged him to steer in that direction. Well would it have been for Columbus had he followed their advice. Within a day or two he would have arrived at Yucatan, the discovery of Mexico and the other opulent countries of New Spain would have necessarily followed, the Southern Ocean would have been disclosed to him, and a succession of splendid discoveries would have shed fresh glory on his declining age, instead of its sinking amidst gloom, neglect, and disappointment.

The Admiral's whole mind however was at present intent upon discovering the strait. As

the countries described by the Indians lay to the west, he supposed that he could easily visit them at some future time, by running with the trade-winds along the coast of Cuba, which he imagined must continue on, so as to join them. At present he was determined to seek the mainland, the mountains of which were visible to the south, and apparently not many leagues distant.* By keeping along it steadfastly to the east, he must at length arrive to where he supposed it to be severed from the coast of Paria by an intervening strait; and passing through this, he should soon make his way to the Spice Islands and the richest parts of India.†

He was encouraged the more to persist in his eastern course by information from the Indians, that there were many places in that direction which abounded with gold. Much of the information which he gathered among these people was derived from an old man more intelligent than the rest, who appeared to be an ancient navigator of these seas. Columbus retained him to serve as a guide along the coast, and dismissed his companions with many presents.

* *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, tom. i.

† Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 20. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

Leaving the island of Guanaja, he stood southwardly for the mainland, and after sailing a few leagues discovered a cape, to which he gave the name of Caxinas, from its being covered with fruit-trees, so called by the natives. It is at present known as Cape Honduras. Here, on Sunday the 14th of August, the Adelantado landed with the captains of the caravels and many of the seamen, to attend mass, which was performed under the trees on the sea-shore, according to the pious custom of the Admiral, whenever circumstances would permit. On the 17th the Adelantado again landed at a river about fifteen miles from the point, on the bank of which he displayed the banners of Castile, taking possession of the country in the name of their Catholic Majesties—from which circumstance he names this the River of Possessions.*

At this place they found upwards of a hundred Indians assembled, laden with bread and maize, fish and fowl, vegetables, and fruits of various kinds. These they laid down as presents before the Adelantado and his party, and drew back to a distance without speaking a word. The Adelantado distributed among them various trinkets, with which they were well pleased, and appeared the next day in

* *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

the same place, in greater numbers, with still more abundant supplies of provisions.

The natives of this neighborhood, and for a considerable distance eastward, had higher foreheads than those of the islands. They were of different languages, and varied from each other in their decorations. Some were entirely naked, and their bodies were marked by means of fire with the figures of various animals. Some wore coverings about the loins, others short cotton jerkins without sleeves; some wore tresses of hair in front. The chieftains had caps of white or colored cotton. When arrayed for any festival they painted their faces black, or with stripes of various colors, or with circles round the eyes. The old Indian guide assured the Admiral that many of them were cannibals. In one part of the coast the natives had their ears bored and hideously distended, which caused the Spaniards to call that region *la Costa de la Oreja*, or "The Coast of the Ear."*

From the River of Possessions Columbus proceeded along what is at present called the coast of Honduras, beating against contrary winds, and struggling with currents, which swept from the east like the constant stream of

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 21. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 90.

a river. He often lost in one tack what he had laboriously gained in two, frequently making but two leagues in a day, and never more than five. At night he anchored under the land, through fear of proceeding along an unknown coast in the dark, but was often forced out to sea by the violence of the currents.* In all this time he experienced the same kind of weather that had prevailed on the coast of Hispaniola, and had attended him more or less for upward of sixty days. There was, he says, almost an incessant tempest of the heavens, with heavy rains, and such thunder and lightning that it seemed as if the end of the world was at hand. Those who know anything of the drenching rains and rending thunder of the tropics will not think his description of the storm exaggerated. His vessels were strained so that their seams opened; the sails and rigging were rent, and the provisions were damaged by the rain and by the leakage. The sailors were exhausted with labor, and harassed with terror. They many times confessed their sins to each other, and prepared for death. "I have seen many tempests," says Columbus, "but none so violent or of such long duration." He alludes to the whole series of storms for upwards of two

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 80.

months, since he had been refused shelter at San Domingo. During a great part of this time he had suffered extremely from the gout, aggravated by his watchfulness and anxiety. His illness did not prevent him attending to his duties; he had a small cabin or chamber constructed on the stern, whence, even when confined to his bed, he could keep a lookout and regulate the sailing of the ships. Many times he was so ill that he thought his end approaching. His anxious mind was distressed about his brother the Adelantado, whom he had persuaded against his will to come on this expedition, and who was in the worst vessel in the squadron. He lamented also having brought with him his son Fernando, exposing him at so tender an age to such perils and hardships, although the youth bore them with the courage and fortitude of a veteran. Often, too, his thoughts reverted to his son Diego, and the cares and perplexities into which his death might plunge him.* At length, after struggling for upwards of forty days since leaving the Cape of Honduras, to make a distance of about seventy leagues, they arrived on the 14th of September at a cape where the coast making an angle turned directly south, so as to give them an easy wind and free navigation.

* Letter from Jamaica. Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

Doubling the point, they swept off with flowing sails and hearts filled with joy; and the Admiral, to commemorate this sudden relief from toil and peril, gave to the cape the name of *Gracias a Dios*, or Thanks to God.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 21. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 91.

Chapter III.

VOYAGE ALONG THE MOSQUITO COAST, AND TRANSACTIONS AT CARIARI.

[1502.]

AFTER doubling Cape Gracios a Dios, Columbus sailed directly south, along what is at present called the Mosquito shore. The land was of varied character, sometimes rugged, with craggy promontories and points stretching into the sea, at other places verdant and fertile, and watered by abundant streams. In the rivers grew immense reeds, sometimes of the thickness of a man's thigh; they abounded with fish and tortoises, and alligators basked on the banks. At one place Columbus passed a cluster of twelve small islands, on which grew a fruit resembling a lemon, on which account he called them the Limonares.*

* P. Martyr, decad. iii., lib. iv. These may have been the lime, a small and extremely acid species of the lemon.

After sailing about sixty-two leagues along this coast, being greatly in want of wood and water, the squadron anchored on the 16th of September, near a copious river, up which the boats were sent to procure the requisite supplies. As they were returning to their ships, a sudden swelling of the sea, rushing in and encountering the rapid current of the river, caused a violent commotion, in which one of the boats was swallowed up, and all on board perished. This melancholy event had a gloomy effect upon the crews, already dispirited and careworn from the hardships they had endured, and Columbus sharing their dejection, gave the stream the sinister name of *El Rio del Desastre*, or the River of Disaster.*

Leaving this unlucky neighborhood they continued for several days along the coast, until finding both ships and his people nearly disabled by the buffetings of the tempests, Columbus, on the 25th of September, cast anchor between a small island and the mainland, in what appeared a commodious and delightful situation. The island was covered with groves of palm-trees, cocoanut-trees, bananas, and a delicate and fragrant fruit which the Admiral continually mistook for the *mira-*

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 21. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 91. *Journal of Porras.*

bolane of the East Indies. The fruits and flowers and odoriferous shrubs of the island sent forth grateful perfumes, so that Columbus gave it the name of La Huerta, or The Garden. It was called by the natives Quiribiri. Immediately opposite, at a short league's distance, was an Indian village named Cariari, situated on the bank of a beautiful river. The country around was fresh and verdant, finely diversified by noble hills and forests, with trees of such height that Las Casas says they appeared to reach the skies.

When the inhabitants beheld the ships they gathered together on the coast, armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs and lances, and prepared to defend their shores. The Spaniards however made no attempt to land during that or the succeeding day, but remained quietly on board repairing the ships, airing and drying the damaged provisions, or reposing from the fatigues of the voyage. When the savages perceived that these wonderful beings, who had arrived in this strange manner on their coast, were perfectly pacific, and made no movement to molest them, their hostility ceased and curiosity predominated. They made various pacific signals, waving their mantles like banners, and inviting the Spaniards to land. Growing still more bold they

swam to the ships, bringing off mantles and tunics of cotton, and ornaments of the inferior sort of gold called guanin, which they wore about their necks. These they offered to the Spaniards. The Admiral however forbade all traffic, making them presents but taking nothing in exchange, wishing to impress them with a favorable idea of the liberality and disinterestedness of the white men. The pride of the savages was touched at the refusal of their proffered gifts, and this supposed contempt for their manufactures and productions. They endeavored to retaliate, by pretending like indifference. On returning to shore they tied together all the European articles which had been given to them without retaining the least trifle, and left them lying on the strand, where the Spaniards found them on a subsequent day.

Finding the soldiers still declined to come on shore, the natives tried in every way to gain their confidence, and dispel the distrust which their hostile demonstrations might have caused. A boat approaching the shore cautiously one day, in quest of some safe place to procure water, an ancient Indian of venerable demeanor issued from among the trees, bearing a white banner on the end of a staff and leading two girls, one about fourteen years of age the other about eight, having jewels of guanin

about their necks. These he brought to the boat and delivered to the Spaniards, making signs that they were to be detained as hostages while the strangers should be on shore. Upon this the Spaniards sallied forth with confidence and filled their water-casks, the Indian remaining at a distance, and observing the strictest care, neither by word nor movement to cause any new distrust. When the boats were about to return to the ships, the old Indian made signs that the young girls should be taken on board, nor would he admit of any denial. On entering the ships the girls showed no signs of grief nor alarm, though surrounded by what to them must have been uncouth and formidable beings. Columbus was careful that the confidence thus placed in him should not be abused. After feasting the young females, and ordering them to be clothed and adorned with various ornaments, he sent them on shore. The night however had fallen and the coast was deserted. They had to return to the ship, where they remained all night under the careful protection of the Admiral. The next morning he restored them to their friends. The old Indian received them with joy, and manifested a grateful sense of the kind treatment they had experienced. In the evening however when the boats went on shore, the

young girls appeared, accompanied by a multitude of their friends, and returned all the presents they had received, nor could they be prevailed upon to retain any of them, although they must have been precious in their eyes; so greatly was the pride of these savages piqued at having their gifts refused.

On the following day, as the Adelantado approached the shore, two of the principal inhabitants entering the water took him out of the boat in their arms, and carrying him to land, seated him with great ceremony on a grassy bank. Don Bartholomew endeavored to collect information from them respecting the country, and ordered the notary of the squadron to write down their replies. The latter immediately prepared pen, ink, and paper, and proceeded to write; but no sooner did the Indians behold this strange and mysterious process, than, mistaking it for some necromantic spell intended to be wrought upon them, they fled with terror. After some time they returned, cautiously scattering a fragrant powder in the air, and burning some of it, in such a direction, that the smoke should be borne towards the Spaniards by the wind. This was apparently intended to counteract any baleful spell, for they regarded the strangers as beings of a mysterious and supernatural order.

The sailors looked upon these counter-charms of the Indians with equal distrust, and apprehended something of magic; nay, Fernando Columbus, who was present and records the scene, appears to doubt whether these Indians were not versed in sorcery, and thus led to suspect it in others.*

Indeed, not to conceal a foible which was more characteristic of the superstition of the age than of the man, Columbus himself entertained an idea of the kind, and assures the sovereigns, in his letter from Jamaica, that the people of Cariari and its vicinity are great enchanters; and he intimates that the two Indian girls who had visited his ship had magic power concealed about their persons. He adds, that the sailors attributed all the delays and hardships experienced on that coast to their being under the influence of some evil spell, worked by the witchcraft of the natives, and that they still remained in that belief.†

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 91.

† Letter from Jamaica.

NOTE.—We find instances of the same kind of superstition in the work of Marco Polo, and as Columbus considered himself in the vicinity of the countries described by that traveller, he may have been influenced in this respect by his narrations. Speaking of the island of Soccotera (Socotra), Marco Polo observes: "The inhabitants deal more in sorcery and

Idol Worship.

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt."

in another there were two bodies wrapped in cotton, and so preserved as to be free from any disagreeable odor. They were adorned with the ornaments most precious to them when living; and the sepulchres were decorated with rude carvings and paintings representing various animals, and sometimes, what appeared to be intended for portraits of the deceased.* Throughout most of the savage tribes there appears to have been great veneration for the dead, and an anxiety to preserve their remains undisturbed.

When about to sail, Columbus seized seven of the people, two of whom, apparently the most intelligent, he selected to serve as guides; the rest he suffered to depart. His late guide he had dismissed with presents at Cape Gracias a Dios. The inhabitants of Cariari manifested unusual sensibility at this seizure of their countrymen. They thronged to the shore, and sent off four of their principal men with presents to the ship, imploring the release of the prisoners.

The Admiral assured them that he only took their companions as guides for a short distance along the coast, and would restore them soon in safety to their homes. He ordered various

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 21. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 91.

presents to be given to the ambassadors; but neither his promises nor gifts could soothe the grief and apprehension of the natives at beholding their friends carried away by beings of whom they had such mysterious apprehensions.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 21. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 91. Letter of Columbus, from Jamaica.

Chapter IV.

VOYAGE ALONG COSTA RICA—SPECULATIONS CONCERNING THE ISTHMUS OF VERAGUA.

[1502.]

ON the 5th of October the squadron departed from Cariari and sailed along what is at present called Costa Rica (or the Rich Coast), from the gold and silver mines found in after years among its mountains. After sailing about twenty-two leagues the ships anchored in a great bay, about six leagues in length and three in breadth, full of islands with channels opening between them, so as to present three or four entrances. It was called by the natives Caribaro,* and had been pointed out by the natives of Cariari as plentiful in gold.

* In some English maps this bay is called Almirante, or Carnabaco Bay. The channel by which Columbus entered is still called Boca del Almirante, or the Mouth of the Admiral.

The islands were beautifully verdant, covered with groves, and sent forth fragrance of fruits and flowers. The channels between them were so deep and free from rocks that the ships sailed along them as if in canals in the streets of a city, the spars and rigging brushing the overhanging branches of the trees. After anchoring, the boats landed on one of the islands, where they found twenty canoes. The people were on shore among the trees. Being encouraged by the Indians of Cariari, who accompanied the Spaniards, they soon advanced with confidence. Here, for the first time on this coast, the Spaniards met with specimens of pure gold, the natives wearing large plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords; they had ornaments likewise of guanin, rudely shaped like eagles. One of them exchanged a plate of gold, equal in value to ten ducats, for three hawks'-bells.*

On the following day the boats proceeded to the mainland at the bottom of the bay. The country around was high and rough, and the villages were generally perched on the heights. They met with ten canoes of Indians, their heads decorated with garlands of flowers and coronets formed of the claws of beasts and the

* *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, tom. i.

quills of birds*; most of them had plates of gold about their necks, but refused to part with them. The Spaniards brought two of them to the Admiral to serve as guides. One had a plate of pure gold worth fourteen ducats, another an eagle worth twenty-two ducats. Seeing the great value which the stranger set upon this metal, they assured them it was to be had in abundance within a distance of two days' journey, and mentioned various places along the coast whence it was procured, particularly Veragua, which was about twenty-five leagues distant. †

The cupidity of the Spaniards was greatly excited, and they would gladly have remained to barter, but the Admiral discouraged all disposition of the kind. He barely sought to collect specimens and information of the riches of the country, and then pressed forward in quest of the great object of his enterprise, the imaginary strait.

Sailing on the 17th of October from this bay, or rather gulf, he began to coast this region of reputed wealth, since called the coast of Veragua, and after sailing about twelve leagues arrived at a large river, which his son Fernando calls the Guaig. Here, on the boats being sent

* P. Martyr, decad. iii., lib. v.

† Columbus's letter from Jamaica.

to land, about two hundred Indians appeared on the shore, armed with clubs, lances, and swords of palm-wood. The forests echoed with the sound of wooden drums and the blasts of conches (shells), their usual war signals. They rushed into the sea up to their waists, brandishing their weapons and splashing the water at the Spaniards in token of defiance, but were soon pacified by gentle signs and the intervention of the interpreters, and willingly bartered away their ornaments, giving seventeen plates of gold, worth one hundred and fifty ducats, for a few toys and trifles.

When the Spaniards returned the next day to renew their traffic they found the Indians relapsed into hostility, sounding their drums and shells and rushing forward to attack the boats. An arrow from the cross-bow, which wounded one of them in the arm, checked their fury, and on the discharge of a cannon they fled with terror. Four of the Spaniards sprang on shore, pursuing and calling after them. They threw down their weapons and came, awestruck and gentle as lambs, bringing three plates of gold, and meekly and thankfully receiving whatever was given in exchange.

Continuing along the coast the Admiral anchored in the mouth of another river, called the Catiba. Here likewise the sound of

drums and conches from among the forests gave notice that the warriors were assembling. A canoe soon came off with two Indians, who, after exchanging a few words with the interpreters, entered the Admiral's ship with fearless confidence, and being satisfied of the friendly intentions of the strangers, returned to their cacique with a favorable report. The boats landed and the Spaniards were kindly received by the cacique. He was naked like his subjects, nor distinguished in any way from them except by the great deference with which he was treated, and by a trifling attention paid to his personal comfort, being protected from a shower of rain by an immense leaf of a tree. He had a large plate of gold, which he readily gave in exchange, and permitted his people to do the same. Nineteen plates of pure gold were procured at this place. Here, for the first time in the New World, the Spaniards met with signs of solid architecture, finding a great mass of stucco formed of stone and lime, a piece of which was retained by the Admiral as a specimen,* considering it an indication of his approach to countries where the arts were in a higher state of cultivation.

He had intended to visit other rivers along this coast, but the wind coming on to blow

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 92.

freshly he ran before it, passing in sight of five towns, where his interpreters assured him he might procure great quantities of gold. One they pointed out as Veragua, which has since given its name to the whole province. Here, they said, were the richest mines, and here most of the plates of gold were fabricated. On the following day they arrived opposite a village called Cubiga, and here Columbus was informed that the country of gold terminated.* He resolved not to return to explore it, considering it as discovered and its mines secured to the Crown, and being anxious to arrive at the supposed strait, which he flattered himself could be at no great distance.

In fact, during his whole voyage along the coast, he had been under the influence of one of his frequent delusions. From the Indians met with at the island of Guanaja, just arrived from Yucatan, he had received accounts of some great, and as far as he could understand, civilized nation in the interior. This intimation had been corroborated, as he imagined, by the various tribes with which he had since communicated. In a subsequent letter to the sovereigns he informs them that all the Indians of this coast concurred in extolling the magnificence of the country of Ciguare, situated at

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 92.

ten days' journey by land to the west. The people of that region wore crowns, and bracelets, and anklets of gold, and garments embroidered with it. They used it for all their domestic purposes, even to the ornamenting and embossing of their seats and tables. On being shown coral the Indians declared that the women of Ciguare wore bands of it about their heads and necks. Pepper and other spices being shown them were equally said to abound there. They described it as a country of commerce, with great fairs and seaports, in which ships arrived armed with cannon. The people were warlike also, armed like the Spaniards with swords, bucklers, cuirasses, and cross-bows, and they mounted on horses. Above all, Columbus understood from them that the sea continued round to Ciguare, and that ten days beyond it was the Ganges.

These may have been vague and wandering rumors concerning the distant kingdoms of Mexico and Peru, and many of the details may have been filled up by the imagination of Columbus. They made, however, a strong impression on his mind. He supposed that Ciguare must be some province belonging to the Grand Khan, or some other eastern potentate, and as the sea reached it he concluded it was on the opposite side of a peninsula; bear-

ing the same position with respect to Veragua that Fontarabia does with Tortosa in Spain, or Pisa with Venice in Italy. By proceeding farther eastward, therefore, he must soon arrive at a strait, like that of Gibraltar, through which he could pass into another sea and visit this country of Ciguare, and of course arrive at the banks of the Ganges. He accounted for the circumstances of his having arrived so near that river by the idea which he had long entertained, that geographers were mistaken as to the circumference of the globe; that it was smaller than was generally imagined, and that a degree of the equinoctial line was but fifty-six miles and two-thirds.*

With these ideas Columbus determined to press forward, leaving the rich country of Veragua unexplored. Nothing could evince more clearly his generous ambition than hurrying in this brief manner along a coast where wealth was to be gathered at every step, for the purpose of seeking a strait which, however it might produce vast benefit to mankind, could yield little else to himself than the glory of the discovery.

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

Chapter V.

DISCOVERY OF PUERTO BELLO AND EL RETRETE—COLUMBUS ABANDONS THE SEARCH AFTER THE STRAIT.

[1502.]

ON the 2d of November the squadron anchored in a spacious and commodious harbor, where the vessels could approach close to the shore without danger. It was surrounded by an elevated country, open and cultivated, with houses within bow-shot of each other, surrounded by fruit-trees, groves of palms, and fields producing maize, vegetables, and the delicious pineapple, so that the whole neighborhood had the mingled appearance of orchard and garden. Columbus was so pleased with the excellence of the harbor and the sweetness of the surrounding country that he gave it the name of Puerto Bello.* It is one of the few

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 23. *Hist. del Almirante.*

places along this coast which retain the appellation given by the illustrious discoverer. It is to be regretted that they have so generally been discontinued, as they were so often records of his feelings and of circumstances attending the discovery.

For seven days they were detained in this port by heavy rain and stormy weather. The natives repaired from all quarters in canoes, bringing fruits and vegetables and balls of cotton, but there was no longer gold offered in traffic. The cacique and seven of his principal chieftains had small plates of gold hanging in their noses, but the rest of the natives appear to have been destitute of all ornaments of the kind. They were generally naked and painted red; the cacique alone was painted black.*

Sailing hence on the 9th of November, they proceeded eight leagues to the eastward to the point since known as Nombre de Dios; but being driven back for some distance they anchored in a harbor in the vicinity of three small islands. These, with the adjacent country of the mainland, were cultivated with fields of Indian corn and various fruits and vegetables, whence Columbus called the harbor

* Peter Martyr, decad. iii., lib. iv.

Puerto de Bastimentos, or Port of Provisions. Here they remained until the 23d, endeavoring to repair their vessels which leaked excessively. They were pierced in all parts by the *teredo* or worm which abounds in the tropical seas. It is of the size of a man's finger, and bores through the stoutest planks and timbers, so as soon to destroy any vessel that is not well coppered. After leaving this port they touched at another called Guiga, where above three hundred of the natives appeared on the shore, some with provisions, and some with golden ornaments, which they offered in barter. Without making any stay, however, the Admiral urged his way forward. But rough and adverse winds again obliged him to take shelter in a small port with a narrow entrance, not above twenty paces wide, beset on each side with reefs of rocks, the sharp points of which rose above the surface. Within there was not room for more than five or six ships, yet the port was so deep that they had no good anchorage unless they approached near enough to the land for a man to leap on shore.

From the smallness of the harbor, Columbus gave it the name of El Retrete, or The Cabinet. He had been betrayed into this inconvenient and dangerous port by the misrepresentations of the seamen sent to examine it, who were

always eager to come to anchor, and have communication with the shore.*

The adjacent country was level and verdant, covered with herbage, but with few trees. The port was infested with alligators, which basked in the sunshine on the beach, filling the air with a powerful and musky odor. They were timorous and fled on being attacked, but the Indians affirmed that if they found a man sleeping on the shore, they would seize and drag him into the water. These alligators Columbus pronounced to be the same as the crocodiles of the Nile. For nine days the squadron was detained in this port by tempestuous weather. The natives of this place were tall, well proportioned, and graceful; of gentle and friendly manners, and brought whatever they possessed to exchange for European trinkets.

As long as the Admiral had control over the actions of his people, the Indians were treated with justice and kindness, and everything went on amicably. The vicinity of the ships to land, however, enabled the seamen to get on shore in the night without license. The natives received them in their dwellings with their accustomed hospitality; but the rough adventurers, instigated by avarice and lust,

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 23. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 92.

soon committed excesses that roused their generous hosts to revenge. Every night there were brawls and fights on shore, and blood was shed on both sides. The number of the Indians daily augmented by arrivals from the interior. They became more powerful and daring as they became more exasperated; and seeing that the vessels lay close to the shore, approached in a great multitude to attack them.

The Admiral thought at first to disperse them by discharging cannon without ball, but they were not intimidated by the sound, regarding it as a kind of harmless thunder. They replied to it by yells and howlings, beating their lances and clubs against the trees and bushes in furious menace. The situation of the ships so close to the shore exposed them to assaults, and made the hostility of the natives unusually formidable. Columbus ordered a shot or two, therefore, to be discharged among them. When they saw the havoc made they fled in terror, and offered no further hostility.*

The continuance of stormy winds from the east and northeast, in addition to the constant opposition of the currents, disheartened the companions of Columbus, and they began to murmur against any further prosecution of the

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 23. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 92.

voyage. The seamen thought that some hostile spell was operating, and the commanders remonstrated against attempting to force their way in spite of the elements, with ships crazed and worm-eaten, and continually in need of repair. Few of his companions could sympathize with Columbus in his zeal for mere discovery. They were actuated by more gainful motives, and looked back with regret on the rich coast they had left behind, to go in search of an imaginary strait. It is probable that Columbus himself began to doubt the object of his enterprise. If he knew the details of the recent voyage of Bastides, he must have been aware that he had arrived from an opposite quarter to about the place where the navigator's exploring voyage from the east had terminated; consequently that there was but little probability of the existence of the strait he had imagined.*

* It appears doubtful whether Columbus was acquainted with the exact particulars of that voyage, as they could scarcely have reached Spain previously to his sailing. Bastides had been seized in Hispaniola by Bobadilla, and was on board of that very fleet which was wrecked at the time that Columbus arrived off San Domingo. He escaped the fate that attended most of his companions, and returned to Spain where he was rewarded by the sovereigns for his enterprise. Though some of his seamen had reached Spain previous to the

At all events, he determined to relinquish the further prosecution of his voyage eastward for the present, and to return to the coast of Veragua, to search for those mines of which he had heard so much, and seen so many indications. Should they prove equal to his hopes, he would have wherewithal to return to Spain in triumph, and silence the reproaches of his enemies, even though he should fail in the leading object of his expedition.

Here, then, ended the lofty anticipations which had elevated Columbus above all mercenary interests; which had made him regardless of hardships and perils, and given an heroic character to the early part of his voyage. It is true he had been in pursuit of a mere chimera, but it was the chimera of a splendid imagination and a penetrating judgment. If he was disappointed in his expectations of finding a strait through the isthmus of Darien, it was because nature herself had been disappointed, for she appears to have attempted to make one, but to have attempted it in vain.

sailing of Columbus, and had given a general idea of the voyage, it is doubtful whether he had transmitted his papers and charts. Porras, in his journal of the voyage of Columbus, states that they arrived at the place where the discoveries of Bastides terminated; but this information he may have obtained subsequently at San Domingo.

Chapter VI.

RETURN TO VERAGUA—THE ADELANTADO EXPLORES THE COUNTRY.

[1502.]

ON the 5th of December Columbus sailed from El Retrete, and relinquishing his course to the east, returned westward, in the search of the gold mines of Veragua. On the same evening he anchored in Puerto Bello, about ten leagues distant; whence departing on the succeeding day, the wind suddenly veered to the west, and began to blow directly adverse to the new course he had adopted. For three months he had been longing in vain for such a wind, and now it came merely to contradict him. Here was a temptation to resume his route to the east, but he did not dare trust to the continuance of the wind, which, in these parts, appeared but sel-

dom to blow from that quarter. He resolved, therefore, to keep on in the present direction, trusting that the breeze would soon change again to the eastward.

In a little while the wind began to blow with dreadful violence, and to shift about, in such manner as to baffle all seamanship. Unable to reach Veragua, the ships were obliged to put back to Puerto Bello, and when they would have entered that harbor, a sudden veering of the gale drove them from the land. For nine days they were blown and tossed about, at the mercy of a furious tempest, in an unknown sea, and often exposed to the awful perils of a lee-shore. It is wonderful that such open vessels, so crazed and decayed, could outlive such a commotion of the elements. Nowhere is a storm so awful as between the tropics. The sea, according to the description of Columbus, boiled at times like a caldron; at other times it ran in mountain waves, covered with foam. At night the raging billows resembled great surges of flame, owing to those luminous particles which cover the surface of the waters in these seas, and throughout the whole course of the Gulf Stream. For a day and night the heavens glowed as a furnace with the incessant flashes of lightning; while the loud claps of thunder were often mistaken by the af-

frighted mariners for signal guns of distress from their foundering companions. During the whole time, says Columbus, it poured down from the skies, not rain, but as it were a second deluge. The seamen were almost drowned in their open vessels. Haggard with toil and affright, some gave themselves over for lost; they confessed their sins to each other, according to the rites of the Catholic religion, and prepared themselves for death; many, in their desperation, called upon death as a welcome relief from such overwhelming horrors. In the midst of this wild tumult of the elements, they beheld a new object of alarm. The ocean in one place became strangely agitated. The water was whirled up into a kind of pyramid or cone, while a livid cloud, tapering to a point, bent down to meet it. Joining together, they formed a vast column, which rapidly approached the ships, spinning along the surface of the deep, and drawing up the waters with a rushing sound. The affrighted mariners, when they beheld this water-spout advancing towards them, despaired of all human means to avert it, and began to repeat passages from St. John the Evangelist. The water-spout passed close by the ships without injuring them, and the trembling mariners attributed their escape to the miraculous

efficacy of their quotations from the Scriptures.*

In this same night they lost sight of one of the caravels, and for three dark and stormy days gave it up for lost. At length, to their great relief, it rejoined the squadron, having lost its boat, and been obliged to cut its cable, in an attempt to anchor on a boisterous coast, and having since been driven to and fro by the storm. For one or two days there was an interval of calm, and the tempest-tossed mariners had time to breathe. They looked upon this tranquillity however as deceitful, and in their gloomy mood, beheld everything with a doubtful and foreboding eye. Great numbers of sharks, so abundant and ravenous in these latitudes, were seen about the ships. This was construed into an evil omen ; for among the superstitions of the seas, it is believed that these voracious fish can smell dead bodies at a distance ; that they have a kind of presentiment of their prey, and keep about vessels which have sick persons on board, or which are in danger of being wrecked. Several of these fish they caught, using large hooks fastened to chains, and sometimes baited merely with a piece of colored cloth. From the maw

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 24. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 90.

of one they took out a living tortoise; from that of another the head of a shark, recently thrown from one of the ships, such is the indiscriminating voracity of these terrors of the ocean. Notwithstanding their superstitious fancies, the seamen were glad to use a part of these sharks for food, being very short of provisions. The length of the voyage had consumed the greater part of their sea-stores; the heat and humidity of the climate, and the leakage of the ships, had damaged the remainder, and their biscuit was so filled with worms, that notwithstanding their hunger, they were obliged to eat in the dark lest their stomach should revolt at its appearance.*

At length, on the 17th, they were enabled to enter a port resembling a great canal, where they enjoyed three days of repose. The natives of this vicinity built their cabins in trees, on stakes or poles laid from one branch to another. The Spaniards supposed this to be through the fear of wild beasts, or of surprisals from neighboring tribes; the different nations of these coasts being extremely hostile to one another. It may have been a precaution against inundations caused by floods from the mountains. After leaving this port they were driven backwards and forwards, by the change-

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 94.

able and tempestuous winds, until the day after Christmas, when they sheltered themselves in another port, where they remained until the 3d of January, 1503, repairing one of the caravels and procuring wood, water, and a supply of maize or Indian corn. These measures being completed, they again put to sea, and on the day of the Epiphany, to their great joy, anchored at the mouth of a river called by the natives Yebra, within a league or two of the river Veragua, and in the country said to be so rich in mines. To this river, from arriving at it on the day of the Epiphany, Columbus gave the name of Belen or Bethlehem.

For nearly a month he had endeavored to accomplish the voyage from Puerto Bello to Veragua, at a distance of about thirty leagues; and had encountered so many troubles and adversities, from changeable winds and currents, and boisterous tempests, that he gave this intermediate line of seaboard the name of *La Costa de los Contrastes* or The Coast of Contradictions.*

Columbus immediately ordered the mouths of the Belen and its neighboring river of Veragua to be sounded. The latter proved too shallow to admit his vessels, but the Belen was somewhat deeper, and it was thought they

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 94.

might enter it with safety. Seeing a village on the banks of the Belen, the Admiral sent the boats on shore to procure information. On their approach the inhabitants issued forth with weapons in hand to oppose their landing, but were readily pacified. They seemed unwilling to give any intelligence about the gold mines; but, on being importuned, declared that they lay in the vicinity of the river of Veragua. To that river the boats were despatched on the following day. They met with the reception so frequent along its coast, where many of the tribes were fierce and warlike, and are supposed to have been of Carib origin. As the boats entered the river the natives sallied forth in their canoes, and others assembled in menacing style on the shores. The Spaniards however had brought with them an Indian of that coast who put an end to this show of hostility by assuring his countrymen that the strangers came only to traffic with them.

The various accounts of the riches of these parts appeared to be confirmed by what the Spaniards saw and heard among these people. They procured in exchange for the veriest trifles twenty plates of gold, with several pipes of the same metal, and crude masses of ore. The Indians informed them that the mines lay

among distant mountains; and that when they went in quest of it they were obliged to practise rigorous fasting and continence.*

The favorable report brought by the boats determined the Admiral to remain in the neighborhood. The river Belen having the greatest depth, two of the caravels entered it on the 9th of January, and the two others on the following day at high tide, which on that coast does not rise above half a fathom.† The natives came to them in the most friendly manner, bringing great quantities of fish, with which that river abounded. They brought also golden ornaments to traffic; but continued to affirm that Veragua was the place whence the ore was procured.

The Adelantado, with his usual activity and

* A superstitious notion with respect to gold appears to have been very prevalent among the natives. The Indians of Hispaniola observed the same privations when they sought for it, abstaining from food and from sexual intercourse. Columbus, who seemed to look upon gold as one of the sacred and mystic treasures of the earth, wished to encourage similar observances among the Spaniards; exhorting them to purify themselves for the research of the mines by fasting, prayer, and chastity. It is scarcely necessary to add, that his advice was but little attended to by his rapacious and sensual followers.

† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 95.

enterprise, set off on the third day, with the boats well armed, to ascend the Veragua about a league and a half, to the residence of Quibian the principal cacique. The chieftain, hearing of his intention, met him near the entrance of the river, attended by his subjects, in several canoes. He was tall, of powerful frame, and warlike demeanor: the interview was extremely amicable. The Cacique presented the Adelantado with the golden ornaments which he wore, and received, as magnificent presents, a few European trinkets. They parted mutually well pleased. On the following day Quibian visited the ships, where he was hospitably entertained by the Admiral. They could only communicate by signs, and as the chieftain was of a taciturn and cautious character, the interview was not of long duration. Columbus made him several presents; the followers of the Cacique exchanged many jewels of gold for the usual trifles, and Quibian returned, without much ceremony, to his home.

On the 24th of January there was a sudden swelling of the river. The waters came rushing from the interior like a vast torrent; the ships were forced from their anchors, tossed from side to side, and driven against each other; the foremast of the Admiral's vessel was carried away, and the whole squadron was in immi-

nent danger of shipwreck. While exposed to this peril in the river, they were prevented from running out to sea by a violent storm, and by the breakers which beat upon the bar. This sudden rising of the river, Columbus attributed to some heavy fall of rain among a range of distant mountains, to which he had given the name of the mountains of San Christoval. The highest of these rose to a peak far above the clouds.*

The weather continued extremely boisterous for several days. At length, on the 6th of February, the sea being tolerably calm, the Adelantado, attended by sixty-eight men well armed, proceeded in the boats to explore the Veragua, and seek its reputed mines. When he ascended the river and drew near to the village of Quibian, situated on the side of a hill, the Cacique came down to the bank to meet him, with a great train of his subjects, unarmed, and making signs of peace. Quibian was naked, and painted after the fashion of the country. One of his attendants drew a great stone out of the river, and washed and rubbed it carefully, upon which the chieftain seated himself as upon a throne.† He received the

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 25. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 95.

† Peter Martyr, decad. iii., lib. iv.

Adelantado with great courtesy ; ior the lofty, vigorous, and iron form of the latter, and his look of resolution and command, were calculated to inspire awe and respect in an Indian warrior. The Cacique, however, was wary and politic. His jealousy was awakened by the intrusion of these strangers into his territories ; but he saw the futility of any open attempt to resist them. He acceded to the wishes of the Adelantado, therefore, to visit the interior of his dominions, and furnished him with three guides to conduct him to the mines.

Leaving a number of his men to guard the boats, the Adelantado departed on foot with the remainder. After penetrating into the interior about four leagues and a half, they slept for the first night on the banks of a river, which seemed to water the whole country with its windings, as they had crossed it upwards of forty times. On the second day, they proceeded a league and a half farther, and arrived among thick forests, where their guides informed them the mines were situated. In fact, the whole soil appeared to be impregnated with gold. They gathered it from among the roots of the trees, which were of an immense height, and magnificent foliage. In the space of two hours each man had collected a little quantity of gold, gathered from the surface of the earth.

Hence the guides took the Adelantado to the summit of a high hill, and showing him an extent of country as far as the eye could reach, assured him that the whole of it, to the distance of twenty days' journey westward, abounded in gold, naming to him several of the principal places.* The Adelantado gazed with enraptured eye over a vast wilderness of continued forest, where only here and there a bright column of smoke from amidst the trees gave sign of some savage hamlet, or solitary wigwam, and the wild unappropriated aspect of this golden country delighted him more than if he had beheld it covered with towns and cities, and adorned with all the graces of cultivation. He returned with his party, in high spirits, to the ships, and rejoiced the Admiral with the favorable report of his expedition. It was soon discovered, however, that the politic Quibian had deceived them. His guides, by his instructions, had taken the Spaniards to the mines of a neighboring cacique with whom he was at war, hoping to divert them into the territories of his enemy. The real mines of Veragua, it was said, were nearer, and much more wealthy.

The indefatigable Adelantado set forth again on the 16th of February, with an armed band

* Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.

of fifty-nine men, marching along the coast westward, a boat with fourteen men keeping pace with him. In this excursion he explored an extensive tract of country, and visited the dominions of various caciques, by whom he was hospitably entertained. He met continually with proofs of abundance of gold; the natives generally wearing great plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords. There were tracts of land, also cultivated with Indian corn,—one of which continued for the extent of six leagues; and the country abounded with excellent fruits. He again heard of a nation in the interior, advanced in arts and arms, wearing clothing and being armed like the Spaniards. Either these were vague and exaggerated rumors concerning the great empire of Peru, or the Adelantado had misunderstood the signs of his informants. He returned after an absence of several days with a great quantity of gold, and with animating accounts of the country. He had found no port, however, equal to the river of Belen, and was convinced that gold was nowhere to be met with in such abundance as in the district of Veragua.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 25. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 95.

Chapter VII.

COMMENCEMENT OF A SETTLEMENT ON THE RIVER BELEN—CONSPIRACY OF THE NATIVES—EXPEDITION OF THE ADELANTADO TO SURPRISE QUIBIAN.

[1503.]

THE reports brought to Columbus from every side, of the wealth of the neighborhood, the golden tract of twenty days' journey in extent shown to his brother from the mountain, the rumors of a rich and civilized country at no great distance, all convinced him that he had reached one of the most favored parts of the Asiatic continent. Again his ardent mind kindled up with glowing anticipation. He fancied himself arrived at a fountain-head of riches, at one of the sources of the unbounded wealth of King Solomon. Josephus, in his work on the antiquities of the Jews, had expressed an opinion that the gold for the building of the Temple of Jerusalem had been procured from the mines

of the Aurea Chersonesus. Columbus supposed the mines of Veragua to be the same. They lay, as he observed, "within the same distance from the pole and from the line"; and if the information which he fancied he had received from the Indians was to be depended on, they were situated about the same distance from the Ganges.*

Here, then, it appeared to him, was a place at which to found a colony and establish a mart that should become the emporium of a vast tract of mines. Within the two first days after his arrival in the country, as he wrote to the sovereigns, he had seen more signs of gold than in Hispaniola during four years. That island, so long the object of his pride and hopes, had been taken from him and was a scene of confusion; the pearl coast of Paria was ravaged by mere adventurers; all his plans concerning both had been defeated; but here was a far more wealthy region than either, and one caculated to console him for all his wrongs and deprivations.

On consulting with his brother therefore he resolved immediately to commence an establishment here for the purpose of securing the possession of the country and exploring and working the mines. The Adelantado agreed

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

to remain with the greater part of the people, while the Admiral should return to Spain for reinforcements and supplies. The greatest despatch was employed in carrying this plan into immediate operation. Eighty men were selected to remain. They were separated into parties of about ten each, and commenced building houses on a small eminence situated on the bank of a creek about a bow-shot within the mouth of the river Belen. The houses were of wood, thatched with the leaves of palm-trees. One larger than the rest was to serve as a magazine, to receive their ammunition, artillery, and a part of their provisions. The principal part was stored, for greater security, on board of one of the caravels, which was to be left for the use of the colony. It was true they had but a scanty supply of European stores remaining, consisting chiefly of biscuit, cheese, pulse, wine, oil, and vinegar; but the country produced bananas, plantains, pine-apples, cocoanuts, and other fruit. There was also maize in abundance, together with various roots, such as were found in Hispaniola. The rivers and sea-coast abounded with fish. The natives, too, made beverages of various kinds; one from the juice of the pineapple, having a vinous flavor; another from maize, resembling beer; and another from the fruit of a species

of palm-trees.* There appeared to be no danger therefore of suffering from famine. Columbus took pains to conciliate the good-will of the Indians, that they might supply the wants of the colony during his absence, and he made many presents to Quibian by way of reconciling him to his intrusion into his territories.†

The necessary arrangements being made for the colony, and a number of the houses being roofed and sufficiently finished for occupation, the Admiral prepared for his departure, when an unlooked-for obstacle presented itself. The heavy rains which had so long distressed him during this expedition had recently ceased. The torrents from the mountains were over, and the river which had once put him to such peril by its sudden swelling, had now become so shallow that there was not above half a fathom of water on the bar. Though his vessels were small, it was impossible to draw them over the sands which choked the mouth of the river, for there was a swell rolling and tumbling upon them, enough to dash his worm-beaten barks to pieces. He was obliged therefore to wait with patience, and pray for the return of those rains which he had lately deplored.

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 96.

† Letter from Jamaica.

In the meantime Quibian beheld with secret jealousy and indignation these strangers erecting habitations and manifesting an intention of establishing themselves in his territories. He was of a bold and warlike spirit and had a great force of warriors at his command, and being ignorant of the vast superiority of the Europeans in the art of war, thought it easy, by a well-concerted artifice, to overwhelm and destroy them. He sent messengers round and ordered all his fighting men to assemble at his residence on the river Veragua under pretext of making war upon a neighboring province. Numbers of the warriors in repairing to his headquarters passed by the harbor. No suspicions of their real design were entertained by Columbus or his officers; but their movements attracted the attention of the chief notary, Diego Mendez, a man of shrewd and prying character and zealously devoted to the Admiral. Doubting some treachery, he communicated his surmises to Columbus and offered to coast along in an armed boat to the river Veragua and reconnoitre the Indian camp. His offer was accepted, and he sallied from the river accordingly, but he had scarcely advanced a league when he descried a large force of Indians on the shore. Landing alone, and ordering that the boat should be kept afloat,

he entered among them. There were about a thousand armed and supplied with provisions as if for an expedition. He offered to accompany them with his armed boat; his offer was declined with evident signs of impatience. Returning to his boat, he kept watch upon them all night, until seeing they were vigilantly observed they returned to Veragua.

Mendez hastened back to the Admiral, and gave it as his opinion that the Indians had been on the way to surprise the Spaniards. The Admiral was loth to believe in such treachery, and was desirous of obtaining clearer information before he took any step that might interrupt the apparently good understanding that existed with the natives. Mendez now undertook, with a single companion, to penetrate by land to the headquarters of Quibian, and endeavor to ascertain his intentions. Accompanied by one Rodrigo de Escobar, he proceeded on foot along the sea-board, to avoid the tangled forests, and arriving at the mouth of the Veragua, found two canoes with Indians, whom he prevailed on, by presents, to convey him and his companion to the village of the Cacique. It was on the bank of the river; the houses were detached and interspersed among trees. There was a bustle of warlike preparation in the

place, and the arrival of the two Spaniards evidently excited surprise and uneasiness. The residence of the Cacique was larger than the others, and situated on a hill which rose from the water's edge. Quibian was confined to the house by indisposition, having been wounded in the leg by an arrow. Mendez gave himself out as a surgeon come to cure the wound: with great difficulty and by force of presents he obtained permission to proceed. On the crest of the hill and in front of the Cacique's dwelling, was a broad, level, open place, round which, on posts, were the heads of three hundred enemies slain in battle. Undismayed by this dismal array, Mendez and his companion crossed the place toward the den of this grim warrior. A number of women and children about the door fled into the house with piercing cries. A young and powerful Indian, son to the Cacique, sallied forth in a violent rage, and struck Mendez a blow which made him recoil several paces. The latter pacified him by presents and assurances that he came to cure his father's wound, in proof of which he produced a box of ointment. It was impossible however to gain access to the Cacique, and Mendez returned with all haste to the harbor to report to the Admiral what he had seen and learnt. It was evident

that there was a dangerous plot impending over the Spaniards, and as far as Mendez could learn from the Indians who had taken him up the river in their canoe, the body of a thousand warriors which he had seen on his previous reconnoitring expedition had actually been on a hostile enterprise against the harbor, but had given it up on finding themselves observed.

This information was confirmed by an Indian of the neighborhood, who had become attached to the Spaniards and acted as interpreter. He revealed to the Admiral the designs of his countrymen, which he had overheard. Quibian intended to surprise the harbor at night with a great force, burn the ships and houses, and make a general massacre. Thus forewarned, Columbus immediately set a double watch upon the harbor. The military spirit of the Adelantado suggested a bolder expedient. The hostile plan of Quibian was doubtless delayed by his wound, and in the meantime he would maintain the semblance of friendship. The Adelantado determined to march at once to his residence, capture him, his family, and principal warriors, send the prisoners to Spain, and take possession of his village.

With the Adelantado to conceive a plan was to carry it into immediate execution, and, in

fact, the impending danger admitted of no delay. Taking with him seventy-four men, well-armed, among whom was Diego Mendez, and being accompanied by the Indian interpreter who had revealed the plot, he set off on the 30th of March, in boats, to the mouth of the Veragua, ascended it rapidly, and before the Indians could have notice of his movements, landed at the foot of the hill on which the house of Quibian was situated.

Lest the Cacique should take alarm and fly at the sight of a large force, he ascended the hill, accompanied by only five men, among whom was Diego Mendez; ordering the rest to come on, with great caution and secresy, two at a time, and at a distance from each other. On the discharge of an arquebuse, they were to surround the dwelling and suffer no one to escape.

As the Adelantado drew near the house, Quibian came forth, and seating himself in the portal, desired the Adelantado to approach singly. Don Bartholomew now ordered Diego Mendez and his four companions to remain at a little distance, and when they should see him take the Cacique by the arm, to rush immediately to his assistance. He then advanced with his Indian interpreter, through whom a short conversation took place, relative to the

surrounding country. The Adelantado then adverted to the wound of the Cacique, and pretending to examine it, took him by the arm. At the concerted signal four of the Spaniards rushed forward, the fifth discharged the arquebuse. The Cacique attempted to get loose, but was firmly held in the iron grasp of the Adelantado. Being both men of great muscular power, a violent struggle ensued. Don Bartholomew, however, maintained the mastery, and Diego Mendez and his companions coming to his assistance, Quibian was bound hand and foot. At the report of the arquebuse the main body of the Spaniards surrounded the house, and seized most of those who were within, consisting of fifty persons, old and young. Among these were the wives and children of Quibian, and several of his principal subjects. No one was wounded, for there was no resistance, and the Adelantado never permitted wanton bloodshed. When the poor savages saw their prince a captive, they filled the air with lamentations; imploring his release, and offering for his ransom a great treasure, which they said laid concealed in a neighboring forest.

The Adelantado was deaf to their supplications and their offers. Quibian was too dangerous a foe to be set at liberty; as a prisoner, he

would be a hostage for the security of the settlement. Anxious to secure his prize, he determined to send the Cacique and the other prisoners on board of the boats, while he remained on shore with a part of his men to pursue the Indians who had escaped. Juan Sanchez, the principal pilot of the squadron, a powerful and spirited man, volunteered to take charge of the captives.

On committing the chieftain to his care the Adelantado warned him to be on his guard against any attempt at rescue or escape. The sturdy pilot replied that if the Cacique got out of his hands, he would give them leave to pluck out his beard, hair by hair; with this vaunt he departed, bearing off Quibian bound hand and foot. On arriving at the boat he secured him by a strong cord to one of the benches. It was a dark night. As the boat proceeded down the river the Cacique complained piteously of the painfulness of his bonds. The rough heart of the pilot was touched with compassion, and he loosened the cord by which Quibian was tied to the bench, keeping the end of it in his hand. The wily Indian watched his opportunity, and when Sanchez was looking another way, plunged into the water and disappeared. So sudden and violent was his plunge, that the pilot had

to let go the cord, lest he should be drawn in after him. The darkness of the night, and the bustle which took place, in preventing the escape of the other prisoners, rendered it impossible to pursue the Cacique, or even to ascertain his fate. Juan Sanchez hastened to the ships with the residue of the captives, deeply mortified at being thus outwitted by a savage.

The Adelantado remained all night on shore. The following morning, when he beheld the wild, unbroken, mountainous nature of the country, and the scattered situation of the habitations, perched on different heights, he gave up the search after the Indians, and returned to the ships with the spoils of the Cacique's mansion. These consisted of bracelets, anklets, and massive plates of gold, such as were worn round the neck, together with two golden coronets. The whole amounted to the value of three hundred ducats.* One fifth of the booty was set apart for the Crown. The residue was shared among those concerned in the enterprise.† To the Adelantado one of the

* Equivalent to one thousand two hundred and eighty-one dollars of the present day.

† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 98. Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 27. Many of the particulars of this chapter are from a short narrative given by Diego Mendez, and inserted in his last will and testament. It is written

coronets was assigned, as a trophy of his exploit.

in a strain of simple egotism, as he represents himself as the principal and almost the sole actor in every affair. The facts, however, have all the air of veracity, and being given on such a solemn occasion, the document is entitled to high credit. He will be found to distinguish himself on another hazardous and important occasion in the course of this history. —*Vide*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

Chapter VIII.

DISASTERS OF THE SETTLEMENT.

[1503.]

IT was hoped by Columbus that the vigorous measure of the Adelantado would strike terror into the Indians of the neighborhood and prevent any further designs upon the settlement. Quibian had probably perished. If he survived, he must be disheartened by the captivity of his family and several of his principal subjects, and fearful of their being made responsible for any act of violence on his part. The heavy rains therefore which fall so frequently among the mountains of this isthmus, having again swelled the river, Columbus made his final arrangements for the management of the colony, and having given much wholesome counsel to the Spaniards who were to remain, and taken an affectionate leave of his brother, got under way with three of the

caravels, leaving the fourth for the use of the settlement. As the water was still shallow at the bar, the ships were lightened of a great part of their cargoes and towed out by the boats in calm weather, grounding repeatedly. When fairly released from the river and their cargoes reshipped, they anchored within a league of the shore to await a favorable wind. It was the intention of the Admiral to touch at Hispaniola on his way to Spain, and send thence supplies and reinforcements. The wind continuing adverse, he sent a boat on shore on the 6th of April, under the command of Diego Tristan, captain of one of the caravels, to procure wood and water and make communications to the Adelantado. The expedition of this boat proved fatal to its crew, but was providential to the settlement.

The Cacique Quibian had not perished as some had supposed. Though both hands and feet were bound, yet in the water he was as in his natural element. Plunging to the bottom, he swam below the surface until sufficiently distant to be out of view in the darkness of the night, and then emerging made his way to shore. The desolation of his home and the capture of his wives and children filled him with anguish, but when he saw the vessels in which they were confined leaving the river and

bearing them off, he was transported with fury and despair. Determined on a signal vengeance, he assembled a great number of his warriors and came secretly upon the settlement. The thick woods by which it was surrounded enabled the Indians to approach unseen within ten paces. The Spaniards thinking the enemy completely discomfited and dispersed, were perfectly off their guard. Some had strayed to the sea-shore to take a farewell look at the ships, some were on board of the caravel in the river, others were scattered about the houses; on a sudden the Indians rushed from their concealment with yells and howlings, launched their arrows through the roofs of palm-leaves, hurled them through the windows, or thrust them through the crevices of the logs which composed the walls. As the houses were small, several of the inhabitants were wounded. On the first alarm, the Adelantado seized a lance and sallied forth with seven or eight of his men. He was joined by Diego Mendez and several of his companions, and they drove the enemy into the forest, killing and wounding several of them. The Indians kept up a brisk fire of darts and arrows from among the trees and made furious sallies with their war-clubs, but there was no withstanding the keen edge of the

Spanish weapons, and a fierce blood-hound being let loose upon them completed their terror. They fled howling through the forest, leaving a number dead on the field, having killed one Spaniard and wounded eight. Among the latter was the Adelantado, who received a slight thrust of a javelin in the breast.

Diego Tristan arrived in his boat during the contest, but feared to approach the land, lest the Spaniards should rush on board in such numbers as to sink him. When the Indians had been put to flight, he proceeded up the river in quest of fresh water, disregarding the warnings of those on shore, that he might be cut off by the enemy in their canoes.

The river was deep and narrow, shut in by high banks, and overhanging trees. The forests on each side were thick and impenetrable; so that there was no landing-place excepting here and there where a footpath wound down to some fishing-ground, or some place where the natives kept their canoes.

The boat had ascended about a league above the village, to a part of the river where it was completely overshadowed by lofty banks and spreading trees. Suddenly, yells and war-whoops and blasts of conch-shells rose on every side. Light canoes darted forth in every direction from dark hollows, and overhanging

Death of Diego Tristan.

From De Lorgue's "Columbus."

customed. The Admiral being ignorant of their misfortunes, would sail away without yielding them assistance, and they would be left to sink beneath the overwhelming force of barbarous foes, or to perish with hunger on this inhospitable coast. In their despair they determined to take the caravel which had been left with them, and abandon the place altogether. The Adelantado remonstrated with them in vain; nothing would content them but to put to sea immediately. Here a new alarm awaited them. The torrents having subsided, the river was again shallow, and it was impossible for the caravel to pass over the bar. They now took the boat of the caravel, to bear tidings of their danger to the Admiral, and implore him not to abandon them; but the wind was boisterous, a high sea was rolling and a heavy surf, tumbling and breaking at the mouth of the river, prevented the boat from getting out. Horrors increased upon them. The mangled bodies of Diego Tristan and his men came floating down the stream, and drifting about the harbor, with flights of crows, and other carrion birds feeding on them, and hovering and screaming, and fighting about their prey. The forlorn Spaniards contemplated this scene with shuddering; it appeared ominous of their own fate.

In the meantime the Indians, elated by their triumphs over the crew of the boat, renewed their hostilities. Whoops and yells answered each other from various parts of the neighborhood. The dismal sound of conches and war-drums in the deep bosom of the woods showed that the number of the enemy was continually augmenting. They would rush forth occasionally upon straggling parties of Spaniards and make partial attacks upon the houses. It was considered no longer safe to remain in the settlement, the close forest which surrounded it being a covert for the approaches of the enemy. The Adelantado chose therefore an open place on the shore at some distance from the wood. Here he caused a kind of bulwark to be made of the boat of the caravel, and of chests, casks, and similar articles. Two places were left open as embrasures in which were placed a couple of falconets or small pieces of artillery in such a manner as to command the neighborhood. In this little fortress the Spaniards shut themselves up; its walls were sufficient to screen them from the darts and arrows of the Indians, but mostly they depended on their fire-arms, the sound of which struck dismay into the savages, especially when they saw the effect of the balls, splintering and rending the trees around them,

and carrying havoc to such a distance. The Indians were thus kept in check for the present, and deterred from venturing from the forest; but the Spaniards, exhausted by constant watching and incessant alarms, anticipated all kinds of evil when their ammunition should be exhausted, or they should be driven forth by hunger to seek for food.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 98. Las Casas, lib. ii.; Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. *Relation of Diego Mendez*, Navarrete, tom. i.; *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, tom. i.

Chapter IX.

DISTRESS OF THE ADMIRAL ON BOARD OF HIS SHIP—ULTIMATE RELIEF OF THE SETTLEMENT.

[1503.]

WHILE the Adelantado and his men were exposed to such imminent peril on shore, great anxiety prevailed on board of the ships. Day after day elapsed without the return of Diego Tristan and his party, and it was feared some disaster had befallen them. Columbus would have sent on shore to make inquiries; but there was only one boat remaining for the service of the squadron, and he dared not risk it in the rough sea and heavy surf. A dismal circumstance occurred to increase the gloom and uneasiness of the crews. On board of one of the caravels were confined the family and household of the Cacique Quibian. It was the intention of Columbus to carry them to Spain,

trusting that as long as they remained in the power of the Spaniards, their tribe would be deterred from further hostilities. They were shut up at night in the forecastle of the caravel, the hatchway of which was secured by a strong chain and padlock. As several of the crew slept upon the hatch, and it was so high as to be considered out of reach of the prisoners, they neglected to fasten the chain. The Indians discovered their negligence. Collecting a quantity of stones from the ballast of the vessel, they made a great heap directly under the hatchway. Several of the most powerful warriors mounted upon the top, and bending their backs, by a sudden and simultaneous effort, forced up the hatch, flinging the seamen who slept upon it to the opposite side of the ship. In an instant the greater part of the Indians sprang forth, plunged into the sea, and swam for shore. Several however were prevented from sallying forth ; others were seized on the deck and forced back into the forecastle ; the hatchway was carefully chained down, and a guard was set for the rest of the night. In the morning when the Spaniards went to examine the captives they were all found dead. Some had hanged themselves with the ends of ropes, their knees touching the floor ; others had strangled themselves by

straining the cord tight with their feet. Such was the fierce, unconquerable spirit of these people, and their horror of the white men.*

The escape of the prisoners occasioned great anxiety to the Admiral, fearing they would stimulate their countrymen to some violent act of vengeance; and he trembled for the safety of his brother. Still this painful mystery reigned over the land. The boat of Diego Tristan did not return, and the raging surf prevented all communications. At length one Pedro Ledesma, a pilot of Seville, a man of about forty-five years of age, and of great strength of body and mind, offered, if the boat would take him to the edge of the surf, to swim to shore and bring off news. He had been piqued by the achievement of the Indian captives in swimming to land at a league's distance, in defiance of sea and surf. "Surely," he said, "if they dare venture so much to procure their individual liberties, I ought to brave at least a part of the danger to save the lives of so many companions." His offer was gladly accepted by the Admiral, and was boldly accomplished. The boat approached with him as near to the surf as safety would permit, where it was to await his return. Here, stripping himself, he plunged into the sea, and after

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 99.

buffeting for some time with the breakers, sometimes rising upon their surges, sometimes buried beneath them and dashed upon the sand, he succeeded in reaching the shore.

He found his countrymen shut up in their forlorn fortress, beleaguered by savage foes, and learnt the tragical fate of Diego Tristan and his companions. Many of the Spaniards in their horror and despair, had thrown off all subordination, refused to assist in any measure that had in view a continuance in this place, and thought of nothing but escape. When they beheld Ledesma, a messenger from the ships, they surrounded him with frantic eagerness, urging him to implore the Admiral to take them on board, and not abandon them on a coast where their destruction was inevitable. They were preparing canoes to take them to the ships, when the weather should moderate, the boat of the caravel being too small; and swore that, if the Admiral refused to take them on board, they would embark in the caravel as soon as it could be extricated from the river, and abandon themselves to the mercy of the seas, rather than remain upon that fatal coast.

Having heard all that his forlorn countrymen had to say, and communicated with the Adelantado and his officers, Ledesma set out

on his perilous return. He again braved the surf and the breakers, reached the boat which was waiting for him, and was conveyed back to the ships. The disastrous tidings from the land filled the heart of the Admiral with grief and alarm. To leave his brother on shore would be to expose him to the mutiny of his own men and the ferocity of the savages. He could spare no reinforcement from the ships, the crews being so much weakened by the loss of Tristan and his companions. Rather than the settlement should be broken up he would gladly have joined the Adelantado with all his people; but in such case how could intelligence be conveyed to the sovereigns of this important discovery, and how could supplies be obtained from Spain? There appeared no alternative, therefore, but to embark all the people, abandon the settlement for the present, and return at some future day, with a force competent to take secure possession of the country.* The state of the weather rendered the practicability even of this plan doubtful. The wind continued high, the sea rough, and no boat could pass between the squadron and the land. The situation of the ships was itself a matter of extreme solicitude. Feebly manned, crazed by storms, and ready to fall to

*Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

pieces from the ravages of the *teredo*, they were anchored on a lee-shore, with a boisterous wind and sea, in a climate subject to tempests, and where the least augmentation of the weather might drive them among the breakers. Every hour increased the anxiety of Columbus for his brother, his people, and his ships, and each hour appeared to render the impending dangers more imminent. Days of constant perturbation, and nights of sleepless anxiety, preyed upon a constitution broken by age, by maladies and hardships, and produced a fever of the mind, in which he was visited by one of those mental hallucinations deemed by him mysterious and supernatural. In a letter to the sovereigns he gives a solemn account of a kind of vision by which he was comforted in a dismal night, when full of despondency and tossing on a couch of pain :

"Wearied and sighing," says he, "I fell into a slumber, when I heard a piteous voice saying to me, 'O fool, and slow to believe and serve thy God, who is the God of all! What did he more for Moses, or for his servant David, than he has done for thee? From the time of thy birth he has ever had thee under his peculiar care. When he saw thee of a fitting age he made thy name to resound marvellously throughout the earth, and thou wert obeyed in many lands, and didst acquire honorable fame among Christians. Of the gates of the Ocean Sea, shut up with such mighty

chains, he delivered thee the keys; the Indies, those wealthy regions of the world, he gave thee for thine own, and empowered thee to dispose of them to others, according to thy pleasure. What did he more for the great people of Israel when he led them forth from Egypt? Or for David, whom, from being a shepherd, he made a king in Judea? Turn to him, then, and acknowledge thine error; his mercy is infinite. He has many and vast inheritances yet in reserve. Fear not to seek them. Thine age shall be no impediment to any great undertaking. Abraham was above an hundred years when he begat Isaac; and was Sarah youthful? Thou urgest despondingly for succor. Answer! who hath afflicted thee so much, and so many times? —God, or the world? The privileges and promises which God hath made thee he hath never broken; neither hath he said, after having received thy service, that this meaning was different, and to be understood in a different sense. He performs to the very letter. He fulfils all that he promises, and with increase. Such is his custom. I have shown thee what thy Creator hath done for thee, and what he doth for all. The present is the reward of the toils and perils thou hast endured in serving others.' I heard all this," adds Columbus, "as one almost dead, and had no power to reply to words so true, excepting to weep for my errors. Whoever it was that spake to me, finished by saying, 'Fear not! Confide! All these tribulations are written in marble, and not without cause.'"

Such is the singular statement which Columbus gave to the sovereigns of his supposed vision. It has been suggested that this was a

mere ingenious fiction, adroitly devised by him to convey a lesson to his prince; but such an idea is inconsistent with his character. He was too deeply imbued with awe of the Deity, and with reverence for his sovereigns, to make such an artifice. The words here spoken to him by the supposed voice are truths, which dwelt upon his mind, and grieved his spirit during his waking hours. It is natural that they should recur vividly and coherently in his feverish dreams; and in recalling and relating a dream one is unconsciously apt to give it a little coherency. Besides, Columbus had a solemn belief that he was a peculiar instrument in the hands of Providence, which, together with the deep tinge of superstition common to the age, made him prone to mistake every striking dream for a revelation. He is not to be measured by the same standard with ordinary men in ordinary circumstances. It is difficult for the mind to realize his situation, and to conceive the exaltations of spirit to which he must have been subjected. The artless manner in which, in his letter to the sovereigns, he mingles up the rhapsodies and dreams of his imagination with simple facts and sound practical observations, pouring them forth with a kind of spiritual solemnity and poetry of language, is one of the most striking

illustrations of a character richly compounded of extraordinary and apparently contradictory elements.

Immediately after his supposed vision and after a duration of nine days, the boisterous weather subsided, the sea became calm, and the communication with the land was restored. It was found impossible to extricate the remaining caravel from the river; but every exertion was made to bring off the people and the property before there should be a return of the bad weather. In this the exertions of the zealous Diego Mendez were eminently efficient. He had been for some days preparing for such an emergency. Cutting up the sails of the caravel, he made great sacks to receive the biscuit. He lashed two Indian canoes together with spars, so that they could not be overturned by the waves, and made a platform on them capable of sustaining a great burden. This kind of raft was laden repeatedly with the stores, arms, and ammunition which had been left on shore, and with the furniture of the caravel, which was entirely dismantled. When well freighted it was towed by the boat to the ships. In this way, by constant and sleepless exertions, in the space of two days almost everything of value was transported on board the squadron, and little else left but the hull of the

caravel, stranded, decayed, and rotting in the river. Diego Mendez superintended the whole embarkation with unwearied watchfulness and activity. He and five companions were the last to leave shore, remaining all night at their perilous post and embarking in the morning with the last cargo of effects.

Nothing could equal the transports of the Spaniards when they found themselves once more on board of the ships, and saw a space of ocean between them and those forests which had lately seemed destined to be their graves. The joy of their comrades seemed little inferior to their own, and the perils and hardships which had surrounded them were forgotten for a time in mutual congratulations. The Admiral was so much impressed with a sense of the high services rendered by Diego Mendez throughout the late time of danger and disaster, that he gave him the command of the caravel, vacant by the death of the unfortunate Diego Tristan.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 99, 100. Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 29. *Relacion por Diego Mendez.* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

Chapter X.

DEPARTURE FROM THE COAST OF VERAGUA—ARRIVAL AT JAMAICA—STRANDING OF THE SHIPS.

[1503.]

THE wind at length becoming favorable, Columbus set sail towards the end of April, from the disastrous coast of Veragua. The wretched condition of the ships, the enfeebled state of the crews, and the scarcity of provisions, determined him to make the best of his way to Hispaniola, where he might refit his vessels and procure the necessary supplies for the voyage to Europe. To the surprise of his pilot and crews however, on making sail, he stood again along the coast to the eastward, instead of steering north, which they considered the direct route to Hispaniola. They fancied that he intended to proceed immediately for Spain, and murmured loudly at the madness of attempting so long

a voyage with ships destitute of stores and consumed by worms. Columbus and his brother however had studied the navigation of those seas with a more observant and experienced eye. They considered it advisable to gain a considerable distance to the east, before standing across for Hispaniola, to avoid being swept away far below their destined port by the strong currents setting constantly to the west.*

The Admiral however did not impart his reasons to the pilots, being anxious to keep the knowledge of his routes as much to himself as possible, seeing that there were so many adventurers crowding into the field and ready to follow on his track. He even took from the mariners their charts,† and boasts, in a letter to the sovereigns, that none of his pilots would be able to retrace the route to and from Veragua, nor to describe where it was situated.

Disregarding the murmurs of his men therefore, he continued along the coast eastward as far as Puerto Bello. Here he was obliged to leave one of the caravels, being so pierced by worms that it was impossible to keep her afloat. All the crews were now crowded into two caravels, and these were little better than mere wrecks. The utmost exertions were necessary

* *Hist. del Almirante.* Letter from Jamaica.

† *Journal of Porras*, Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

to keep them free from water; while the incessant labor of the pumps bore hard on men enfeebled by scanty diet and dejected by various hardships. Continuing onward, they passed Port Retrete and a number of islands, to which the Admiral gave the name of Las Barbas, now termed the Mulatas, a little beyond Point Blas. Here he supposed that he had arrived at the province of Mangi in the territories of the Grand Khan described by Marco Polo as adjoining to Cathay.* He continued on about ten leagues farther until he approached the entrance of what is at present called the gulf of Darien. Here he had a consultation with his captains and pilots, who remonstrated at his persisting in this struggle against contrary winds and currents, representing the lamentable plight of the ships and the infirm state of the crews.† Bidding farewell therefore to the main-land, he stood northward on the 1st of May in quest of Hispaniola. As the wind was easterly, with a strong current setting to the west, he kept as near the wind as possible. So little did his pilots know of their situation that they supposed themselves to the east of the Caribbee Islands, whereas

* Letter from Jamaica.

† Testimony of Pedro de Ledesma. *Pleito de los Colones.*

the Admiral feared that, with all his exertions, he should fall to the westward of Hispaniola.* His apprehensions proved to be well founded; for on the 10th of the month he came in sight of two small low islands to the northwest of Hispaniola, to which, from the great quantities of tortoises seen about them, he gave the name of the Tortugas; they are now known as the Caymans. Passing wide of these and continuing directly north he found himself on the 30th of May among the cluster of islands on the south side of Cuba, to which he had formerly given the name of the Queen's Gardens—having been carried between eight and nine degrees west of his destined port. Here he cast anchor near one of the Keys, about ten leagues from the main island. His crews were suffering excessively through scanty provisions and great fatigue; nothing was left of the sea-stores but a little biscuit, oil, and vinegar, and they were obliged to labor incessantly at the pumps to keep the vessels afloat. They had scarcely anchored at these islands when there came on at midnight a sudden tempest of such violence that, according to the strong expression of Columbus, it seemed as if the world would dissolve.* They lost three of their anchors almost immediately, and the caravel

* Letter from Jamaica.

Bermuda was driven with such violence upon the ship of the Admiral that the bow of the one and the stern of the other were greatly shattered. The sea running high and the wind being boisterous, the vessels chaffed and injured each other dreadfully, and it was with great difficulty that they were separated. One anchor only remained to the Admiral's ship, and this saved him from being driven upon the rocks; but at daylight the cable was found nearly worn asunder. Had the darkness continued an hour longer he could scarcely have escaped shipwreck.*

At the end of six days, the weather having moderated, he resumed his course, standing eastward for Hispaniola; "his people," as he says, "dismayed and downhearted, almost all his anchors lost, and his vessels bored as full of holes as a honeycomb." After struggling against contrary winds and the usual currents from the east, he reached Cape Cruz, and anchored at a village in the province of Macaca,† where he had touched in 1494 in his voyage along the southern coast of Cuba. Here he was detained by head-winds for several days, during which he was supplied with cassava

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 100. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

† *Hist. del Almirante. Journal of Porras.*

bread by the natives. Making sail again, he endeavored to beat up to Hispaniola; but every effort was in vain. The winds and currents continued adverse; the leaks continually gained upon his vessels, though the pumps were kept incessantly going, and the seamen even baled the water with buckets and kettles. The Admiral now stood in despair for the island of Jamaica, to seek some secure port, for there was imminent danger of foundering at sea. On the eve of St. John, the 23d of June, they put into Puerto Bueno, now called Dry Harbor, but met with none of the natives from whom they could obtain provisions, nor was there any fresh water to be had in the neighborhood. Suffering from hunger and thirst, they sailed eastward on the following day to another harbor, to which the Admiral on his first visit to the island had given the name of Port Santa Gloria.

Here, at last, Columbus had to give up his long and arduous struggle against the unremitting persecution of the elements. His ships, reduced to mere wrecks, could no longer keep the sea, and were ready to sink even in port. He ordered them, therefore, to be run aground, within a bow-shot of the shore, and fastened together, side by side. They soon filled with water to the decks. Thatched cabins were

then erected at the prow and stern for the accommodation of the crews, and the wreck was placed in the best possible state of defence. Thus castled in the sea, he trusted to be able to repel any sudden attack of the natives, and at the same time to keep his men from roving about the neighborhood and indulging in their usual excesses. No one was allowed to go on shore without especial license, and the utmost precaution was taken to prevent any offence being given to the Indians. Any exasperation of them might be fatal to the Spaniards in their forlorn situation. A firebrand thrown into their wooden fortress might wrap it in flames, and leave them defenceless amidst hostile thousands.

Book XVI.

Chapter I.

ARRANGEMENT OF DIEGO MENDEZ WITH THE CACIQUES FOR SUPPLIES OF PROVISIONS—SENT TO SAN DOMINGO BY COLUMBUS IN QUEST OF RELIEF.

[1503.]

THE island of Jamiaca was extremely populous and fertile; and the harbor soon swarmed with Indians, who brought provisions to barter with the Spaniards. To prevent any disputes in purchasing or sharing these supplies, two persons were appointed to superintend all bargains, and the provisions thus obtained were divided every evening among the people. This arrangement had a happy effect in promoting a peaceful intercourse. The stores thus furnished, however, coming from a limited neighborhood of improvident beings, were not sufficient for the necessities of the Spaniards, and were so irregular as often to leave them in pinching want. They feared, too, that the neighborhood

might soon be exhausted, in which case they would be reduced to famine. In this emergency, Diego Mendez stepped forward with his accustomed zeal, and volunteered to set off with three men on a foraging expedition about the island. His offer being gladly accepted by the Admiral, he departed with his comrades, well armed. He was everywhere treated with the utmost kindness by the natives. They took him to their houses, set meat and drink before him and his companions, and performed all the rites of savage hospitality. Mendez made an arrangement with the cacique of a numerous tribe, that his subjects should hunt and fish, and make cassava bread, and bring a quantity of provisions every day to the harbor. They were to receive, in exchange, knives, combs, beads, fish-hooks, hawks'-bells, and other articles, from a Spaniard who was to reside among them for that purpose. The agreement being made, Mendez despatched one of his comrades to apprise the Admiral. He then pursued his journey three leagues farther, when he made a similar arrangement, and despatched another of his companions to the Admiral. Proceeding onward, about thirteen leagues from the ships, he arrived at the residence of another cacique, called Huarco, where he was generously entertained. The Cacique

ordered his subjects to bring a large quantity of provisions, for which Mendez paid him on the spot, and made arrangements for a like supply at stated intervals. He despatched his third companion with this supply to the Admiral, requesting, as usual, that an agent might be sent to receive and pay for the regular deliveries of provisions.

Mendez was now left alone, but he was fond of any enterprise that gave individual distinction. He requested of the Cacique two Indians to accompany him to the end of the island; one to carry his provisions, and the other to bear the hammock, or cotton net, in which he slept. These being granted he pushed resolutely forward along the coast, until he reached the eastern extremity of Jamaica. Here he found a powerful cacique of the name of Ameyro. Mendez had buoyant spirits, great address, and an ingratiating manner with the savages. He and the Cacique became great friends, exchanged names, which is a kind of token of brotherhood, and Mendez engaged him to furnish provisions to the ships. He then bought an excellent canoe of the Cacique, for which he gave a splendid brass basin, a short frock or cassock, and one of the two shirts which formed his stock of linen. The Cacique furnished him with six Indians

to navigate his bark, and they parted mutually well pleased. Diego Mendez coasted his way back, touching at the various places where he had made his arrangements. He found the Spanish agents already arrived at them, loaded his canoe with provisions, and returned in triumph to the harbor, where he was received with acclamations by his comrades, and with open arms by the Admiral. The provisions he brought were a most seasonable supply, for the Spaniards were absolutely fasting; and thenceforward Indians arrived daily, well laden, from the marts which he had established.*

The immediate wants of his people being thus provided for, Columbus revolved, in his anxious mind, the means of getting from this island. His ships were beyond the possibility of repair, and there was no hope of any chance sail arriving to his relief, on the shores of a savage island in an unfrequented sea. The most likely measure appeared to be, to send notice of his situation to Ovando, the governor at San Domingo, entreating him to despatch a vessel to his relief. But how was this message to be conveyed? The distance between Jamaica and Hispaniola was forty leagues, across a gulf swept by contrary currents; there were no

* *Relacion por Diego Mendez.* Navarrete, tom. i.

means of transporting a messenger, except in the light canoes of the savages; and who would undertake so hazardous a voyage in a frail bark of the kind? Suddenly the idea of Diego Mendez, and the canoe he had recently purchased, presented itself to the mind of Columbus. He knew the ardor and intrepidity of Mendez, and his love of distinction by any hazardous exploit. Taking him aside, therefore, he addressed him in a manner calculated both to stimulate his zeal, and flatter his self-love. Mendez himself gives an artless account of this interesting conversation, which is full of character.

"'Diego Mendez, my son,' said the venerable Admiral, 'none of those whom I have here understand the great peril in which we are placed, excepting you and myself. We are few in number, and these savage Indians are many, and of fickle and irritable natures. On the least provocation they may throw firebrands from the shore, and consume us in our straw-thatched cabins. The arrangement which you have made with them for provisions, and which at present they fulfil so cheerfully, to-morrow they may break in their caprice, and may refuse to bring us anything; nor have we the means to compel them by force, but are entirely at their pleasure. I have thought of a remedy, if it meets with your views. In this canoe which you have purchased, some one may pass over to Hispaniola, and procure a ship, by which we may all be delivered from this great peril into

which we have fallen. Tell me your opinion on the matter.'

"To this," says Diego Mendez, "I replied: 'Señor, the danger in which we are placed, I well know, is far greater than is easily conceived. As to passing from this island to Hispaniola, in so small a vessel as a canoe, I hold it not merely difficult, but impossible; since it is necessary to traverse a gulf of forty leagues, and between islands where the sea is extremely impetuous, and seldom in repose. I know not who there is would adventure upon so extreme a peril.'"

Columbus made no reply, but from his looks and the nature of his silence, Mendez plainly perceived himself to be the person whom the Admiral had in view;

"Whereupon," continues he, "I added: 'Señor, I have many times put my life in peril of death to save you and all those who are here, and God has hitherto preserved me in a miraculous manner. There are, nevertheless, murmurers, who say that your Excellency intrusts to me all affairs wherein honor is to be gained, while there are others in your company who would execute them as well as I do. Therefore I beg that you would summon all the people, and propose this enterprise to them, to see if among them there is any one who will undertake it, which I doubt. If all decline it, I will then come forward and risk my life in your service, as I many times have done.'" *

* *Relacion por Diego Mendez.* Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

The Admiral gladly humored the wishes of the worthy Mendez, for never was simple egotism accompanied by more generous and devoted loyalty. On the following morning, the crew was assembled, and the proposition publicly made. Every one drew back at the thoughts of it, pronouncing it the height of rashness. Upon this, Diego Mendez stepped forward. "Señor," said he, "I have but one life to lose, yet I am willing to venture it for your service and for the good of all here present, and I trust in the protection of God, which I have experienced on so many other occasions."

Columbus embraced his zealous follower, who immediately set about preparing for his expedition. Drawing his canoe on shore, he put on a false keel, nailed weatherboards along the bow and stern, to prevent the sea from breaking over it; payed it with a coat of tar, furnished it with a mast and sail, and put in provisions for himself, a Spanish comrade, and six Indians.

In the meantime, Columbus wrote letters to Ovando, requesting that a ship might be immediately sent to bring him and his men to Hispaniola. He wrote a letter likewise to the sovereigns; for, after fulfilling his mission at San Domingo, Diego Mendez was to proceed

to Spain on the Admiral's affairs. In the letter to the sovereigns, Columbus depicted his deplorable situation, and entreated that a vessel might be despatched to Hispaniola, to convey himself and his crew to Spain. He gave a comprehensive account of his voyage, most particulars of which have already been incorporated in this history, and he insisted greatly on the importance of the discovery of Veragua. He gave it as his opinion, that here were the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus, whence Solomon had derived such wealth for the building of the Temple. He entreated that this golden coast might not, like other places which he had discovered, be abandoned to adventurers, or placed under the government of men who felt no interest in the cause. "This is not a child," he adds, "to be abandoned to a stepmother. I never think of Hispaniola and Paria without weeping. Their case is desperate, and past cure; I hope their example may cause this region to be treated in a different manner." His imagination becomes heated. He magnifies the supposed importance of Veragua, as transcending all his former discoveries; and he alludes to his favorite project for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre: "Jerusalem," he says, "and Mount Sion are to be rebuilt by the hand of

a Christian. Who is he to be? God by the mouth of the Prophet in the Fourteenth Psalm, declares it. The Abbot Joachim* says that he is to come out of Spain." His thoughts then revert to the ancient story of the Grand Khan, who had requested that sages might be sent to instruct him in the Christian faith. Columbus, thinking that he had been in the very vicinity of Cathay, exclaims with sudden zeal, "Who will offer himself for this task? If our Lord permit me to return to Spain, I engage to take him there, God helping, in safety."

Nothing is more characteristic of Columbus than his earnest, artless, at times eloquent, and

* Joachim, native of the burgh of Celico, near Cozenza, travelled in the Holy Land. Returning to Calabria, he took the habit of the Cistercians in the monastery of Corazzo, of which he became prior and abbot, and afterwards rose to higher monastic importance. He died in 1202, having attained seventy-two years of age, leaving a great number of works; among the most known are commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Apocalypse. There are also prophecies by him, "which," (says the *Dictionnaire Historique*,) "during his life, made him to be admired by fools, and despised by men of sense; at present the latter sentiment prevails. He was either very weak or very presumptuous, to flatter himself that he had the keys of things of which God reserves the knowledge to himself."—*Dict. Hist.*, tom. v., Caen, 1785.

at times almost incoherent letters. What an instance of soaring enthusiasm and irrepressible enterprise is here exhibited. At the time that he was indulging in these visions, and proposing new and romantic enterprises, he was broken down by age and infirmities, racked by pain, confined to his bed, and shut up in a wreck on the coast of a remote and savage island. No stronger picture can be given of his situation, than that which shortly follows this transient glow of excitement; when with one of his sudden transitions of thought, he awakens, as it were, to his actual condition.

"Hitherto," says he, "I have wept for others; but now, have pity upon me, Heaven, and weep for me, O earth! In my temporal concerns, without a farthing to offer for a mass; cast away here in the Indies; surrounded by cruel and hostile savages, isolated, infirm, expecting each day will be my last; in spiritual concerns, separated from the holy sacraments of the Church, so that my soul, if parted here from my body, must be forever lost! Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth, and justice! I came not on this voyage to gain honor or estate, that is most certain, for all hope of the kind was already dead within me. I came to serve your Majesties, with a sound intention and an honest zeal, and I speak no falsehood. If it should please God to deliver me hence, I humbly supplicate your majesties to permit me to repair to Rome, and perform other pilgrimages."

The despatches being ready, and the preparations of the canoe completed, Diego Mendez embarked, with his Spanish comrade and his six Indians, and departed along the coast to the eastward. The voyage was toilsome and perilous. They had to make their way against strong currents. Once they were taken by roving canoes of Indians, but made their escape, and at length arrived at the end of the island; a distance of thirty-four leagues from the harbor. Here they remained, waiting for calm weather to venture upon the broad gulf, when they were suddenly surrounded and taken prisoners by a number of hostile Indians, who carried them off a distance of three leagues, where they determined to kill them. Some dispute arose about the division of the spoils taken from the Spaniards, whereupon the savages agreed to settle it by a game of chance. While they were thus engaged, Diego Mendez escaped, found his way to his canoe, embarked in it, and returned alone to the harbor after fifteen days' absence. What became of his companions he does not mention, being seldom apt to speak of any person but himself. This account is taken from the narrative inserted in his last will and testament.

Columbus, though grieved at the failure of his message, was rejoiced at the escape of the

faithful Mendez. The latter, nothing daunted by the perils and hardships he had undergone, offered to depart immediately on a second attempt, provided he could have persons to accompany him to the end of the island, and protect him from the natives. This the Adelantado offered to undertake, with a large party well armed. Bartholomew Fiesco, a Genoese, who had been captain of one of the caravels, was associated with Mendez in his second expedition. He was a man of great worth, strongly attached to the Admiral, and much esteemed by him. Each had a large canoe under his command, in which were six Spaniards and ten Indians—the latter were to serve as oarsmen. The canoes were to keep in company. On reaching Hispaniola, Fiesco was to return immediately to Jamaica, to relieve the anxiety of the Admiral and his crew by tidings of the safe arrival of their messenger. In the meantime, Diego Mendez was to proceed to San Domingo, deliver his letter to Ovando, procure and despatch a ship, and then depart for Spain with a letter to the sovereigns.

All arrangements being made, the Indians placed in the canoes their frugal provision of cassava bread, and each his calabash of water. The Spaniards, besides their bread, had a supply of the flesh of utias, and each his sword

and target. In this way they launched forth upon their long and perilous voyages, followed by the prayers of their countrymen.

The Adelantado with his armed band kept pace with them along the coast. There was no attempt of the natives to molest them, and they arrived in safety at the end of the island. Here they remained three days before the sea was sufficiently calm for them to venture forth in their feeble barks. At length the weather being quite serene, they bade farewell to their comrades and committed themselves to the broad sea. The Adelantado remained watching them, until they became mere specks on the ocean, and the evening hid them from his view. The next day he set out on his return to the harbor, stopping at various villages on the way, and endeavoring to confirm the good will of the natives.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 101.

Chapter 11.

MUTINY OF PORRAS.

[1503.]

IT might have been thought that the adverse fortune which had so long persecuted Columbus was now exhausted. The envy which had once sickened at his glory and prosperity could scarcely have devised for him a more forlorn heritage in the world he had discovered. The tenant of a wreck on a savage coast in an untraversed ocean, at the mercy of the barbarous hordes, who in a moment, from precarious friends might be transformed into ferocious enemies; afflicted, too, by excruciating maladies which confined him to his bed, and by the pains and infirmities which hardships and anxiety had heaped upon his advancing age. But he had not yet exhausted his cup of bitterness. He had yet to experience an evil worse than storm or shipwreck or bodily anguish, or the vio-

lence of savage hordes,—the perfidy of those in whom he confided.

Mendez and Fiesco had not long departed when the Spaniards in the wreck began to grow sickly, partly from the toils and exposures of the recent voyage, partly from being crowded in narrow quarters in a moist and sultry climate, and partly from want of their accustomed food, for they could not habituate themselves to the vegetable diet of the Indians. Their maladies were rendered more insupportable by mental suffering, by that suspense which frets the spirit, and that hope deferred which corrodes the heart. Accustomed to a life of bustle and variety, they had now nothing to do but loiter about the dreary hulk, look out upon the sea, watch for the canoe of Fiesco, wonder at its protracted absence, and doubt its return. A long time elapsed, much more than sufficient for the voyage, but nothing was seen or heard of the canoe. Fears were entertained that their messenger had perished. If so, how long were they to remain here, vainly looking for relief which was never to arrive? Some sank into deep despondency, others became peevish and impatient. Murmurs broke forth, and, as usual with men in distress, murmurs of the most unreasonable kind. Instead of sympathizing with their aged

and infirm commander who was involved in the same calamity, who in suffering transcended them all, and yet who was incessantly studious of their welfare, they began to rail against him as the cause of all their misfortunes.

The factious feeling of an unreasonable multitude would be of little importance if left to itself, and might end in idle clamor; it is the industry of one or two evil spirits which generally directs it to an object and makes it mischievous. Among the officers of Columbus were two brothers, Francisco and Diego de Porras. They were related to the royal treasurer Morales, who had married their sister, and had made interest with the Admiral to give them some employment in the expedition.* To gratify the treasurer he had appointed Francisco de Porras captain of one of the caravels, and obtained for his brother Diego the situation of notary and accountant-general of the squadron. He had treated them, as he declares, with the kindness of relatives, though both proved incompetent to their situations. They were vain and insolent men, and, like many others whom Columbus had benefited, requited his kindness with black ingratitude.†

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 102.

† Letter of Columbus to his son Diego. Navarrete, *Colec.*

These men, finding the common people in a highly impatient and discontented state, wrought upon them with seditious insinuations, assuring them that all hope of relief through the agency of Mendez was idle; it being a mere delusion of the Admiral to keep them quiet, and render them subservient to his purposes. He had no desire nor intention to return to Spain; and, in fact, was banished thence. Hispaniola was equally closed to him, as had been proved by the exclusion of his ships from its harbor in a time of peril. To him at present all places were alike, and he was content to remain in Jamaica until his friends could make interest at court and procure his recall from banishment. As to Mendez and Fiesco, they had been sent to Spain by Columbus on his own private affairs, not to procure a ship for the relief of his followers. If this were not the case, why did not the ships arrive, or why did not Fiesco return, as had been promised? Or if the canoes had really been sent for succor, the long time that had elapsed without tidings of them gave reasons to believe they had perished by the way. In such case their only alternative would be to take the canoes of the Indians and endeavor to reach Hispaniola. There was no hope, however, of persuading the Admiral to such an undertak-

ing; he was too old, and too helpless from the gout to expose himself to the hardships of such a voyage. What then? were they to be sacrificed to his interests or his infirmities?—to give up their only chance for escape, and linger and perish with him in this desolate wreck? If they succeeded in reaching Hispaniola, they would be the better received for having left the Admiral behind. Ovando was secretly hostile to him, fearing that he would regain the government of the island. On their arrival in Spain the Bishop Fonseca, from his enmity to Columbus, would be sure to take their part. The brothers Porras had powerful friends and relatives at court to counteract any representations that might be made by the Admiral; and they cited the case of Roldan's rebellion, to show that the prejudices of the public and of men in power would always be against him. Nay, they insinuated that the sovereigns, who on that occasion had deprived him of part of his dignities and privileges, would rejoice at a pretext of stripping him of the remainder.*

Columbus was aware that the minds of his people were embittered against him. He had repeatedly been treated with insolent impatience and reproached with being the cause of their disasters. Accustomed however to the

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 102.

unreasonableness of men in adversity, and exercised by many trials in the mastery of his passions, be bore with their petulance, soothed their irritation, and endeavored to cheer their spirits by the hopes of speedy succor. A little while longer, and he trusted that Fiesco would arrive with good tidings, when the certainty of relief would put an end to all these clamors. The mischief, however, was deeper than he apprehended; a complete mutiny had been organized.

On the 2d of January, 1504, he was in his small cabin on the stern of his vessel, being confined to his bed by the gout, which had now rendered him a complete cripple. While ruminating on his disastrous situation, Francisco de Porras suddenly entered. His abrupt and agitated manner betrayed the evil nature of his visit. He had the flurried impudence of a man about to perpetrate an open crime. Breaking forth into bitter complaints at their being kept week after week and month after month to perish piecemeal in that desolate place, he accused the Admiral of having no intention to return to Spain. Columbus suspected something sinister from this unusual arrogance; he maintained, however, his calmness, and raising himself in his bed, endeavored to reason with Porras. He pointed out the

impossibility of departing until those who had gone to Hispaniola should send them vessels. He represented how much more urgent must be his desire to depart, since he had not merely his own safety to provide for, but was accountable to God and his sovereigns for the welfare of all who had been committed to his charge. He reminded Porras that he had always consulted with them all as to the measures to be taken for the common safety, and that what he had done had been with the general approbation; still, if any other measure appeared advisable, he recommended that they should assemble together, and consult upon it, and adopt whatever course appeared most judicious.

The measures of Porras and his comrades, however, were already concerted, and when men are determined on mutiny they are deaf to reason. He bluntly replied that there was no time for further consultations. "Embark immediately, or remain in God's name, were the only alternatives." "For my part," said he, turning his back upon the Admiral and elevating his voice so that it resounded all over the vessel, "I am for Castile! those who choose may follow me!" Shouts arose immediately from all sides, "I will follow you! and I! and I!" Numbers of the crew sprang

upon the most conspicuous parts of the ship, brandishing weapons and uttering mingled threats and cries of rebellion. Some called upon Porras for orders what to do; others shouted "To Castile! to Castile!" while amidst the general uproar the voices of some desperadoes were heard menacing the life of the Admiral.

Columbus, hearing the tumult, leaped from his bed, ill and infirm as he was, and tottered out of the cabin, stumbling and falling in the exertion, hoping by his presence to pacify the mutineers. Three or four of his faithful adherents, however, fearing some violence might be offered him, threw themselves between him and the throng, and taking him in their arms compelled him to return to his cabin.

The Adelantado likewise sallied forth, but in a different mood. He planted himself, with lance in hand, in a situation to take the whole brunt of the assault. It was with the greatest difficulty that several of the loyal part of the crew could appease his fury, and prevail upon him to relinquish his weapon, and retire to the cabin of his brother. They now entreated Porras and his companions to depart peaceably, since no one sought to oppose them. No advantage could be gained by violence; but should they cause the death of the Admi-

ral they would draw upon themselves the severest punishment from the sovereigns.*

These representations moderated the turbulence of the mutineers, and they now proceeded to carry their plans into execution. Taking ten canoes which the Admiral had purchased of the Indians, they embarked in them with as much exultation as if certain of immediately landing on the shores of Spain. Others who had not been concerned in the mutiny, seeing so large a force departing and fearing to remain behind when so reduced in number, hastily collected their effects and entered likewise into the canoes. In this way forty-eight abandoned the Admiral. Many of those who remained were only detained by sickness, for had they been well most of them would have accompanied the deserters.† The few who remained faithful to the Admiral, and the sick who crawled forth from their cabins, saw the departure of the mutineers with tears and lamentations, giving themselves up for lost. Notwithstanding his malady, Columbus left his bed, mingling among those who were loyal and visiting those who were ill, endeavoring in every way to cheer and comfort them.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 32. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 102.

† *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 102.

He entreated them to put their trust in God, who would yet relieve them ; and he promised on his return to Spain to throw himself at the feet of the Queen, represent their loyalty and constancy, and obtain for them rewards that should compensate for all their sufferings.*

In the meantime Francisco de Porras and his followers, in their squadron of canoes, coasted the island to the eastward, following the route taken by Mendez and Fiesco. Wherever they landed they committed outrages upon the Indians, robbing them of their provisions and of whatever they coveted of their effects. They endeavored to make their own crimes redound to the prejudice of Columbus, pretending to act under his authority and affirming that he would pay for everything they took. If he refused, they told the natives to kill him. They represented him as an implacable foe to the Indians ; as one who had tyrannized over other islands, causing the misery and death of the natives, and who only sought to gain a sway here for the purpose of inflicting like calamities.

Having reached the eastern extremity of the island, they waited until the weather should be perfectly calm before they ventured to cross the gulf. Being unskilled in the management

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 32.

of canoes, they procured several Indians to accompany them. The sea being at length quite smooth, they set forth upon their voyage. Scarcely had they proceeded four leagues from land when a contrary wind arose and the waves began to swell. They turned immediately for shore. The canoes, from their light structure and being nearly round and without keels, were easily overturned and required to be carefully balanced. They were now deeply freighted by men unaccustomed to them, and as the sea rose they frequently let in the water. The Spaniards were alarmed and endeavored to lighten them by throwing overboard everything that could be spared, retaining only their arms and a part of their provisions. The danger augmented with the wind. They now compelled the Indians to leap into the sea, excepting such as were absolutely necessary to navigate the canoes. If they hesitated, they drove them overboard with the edge of the sword. The Indians were skilful swimmers, but the distance to land was too great for their strength. They kept about the canoes, therefore, taking hold of them occasionally to rest themselves and recover breath. As their weight disturbed the balance of the canoes and endangered their overturning, the Spaniards cut off their hands and stabbed them

with their swords. Some died by the weapons of these cruel men, others were exhausted and sank beneath the waves; thus eighteen perished miserably, and none survived but such as had been retained to manage the canoes.

When the Spaniards got back to land, different opinions arose as to what course they should next pursue. Some were for crossing to Cuba, for which island the wind was favorable. It was thought they might easily cross thence to the end of Hispaniola. Others advised that they should return, and make their peace with the Admiral, or take from him what remained of arms and stores, having thrown almost everything overboard during their late danger. Others counselled another attempt to cross over to Hispaniola, as soon as the sea should become tranquil.

This last advice was adopted. They remained for a month at an Indian village near the eastern point of the island, living on the substance of the natives, and treating them in the most arbitrary and capricious manner. When at length the weather became serene, they made a second attempt, but were again driven back by adverse winds. Losing all patience, therefore, and despairing of the enterprise, they abandoned their canoes, and returned westward; wandering from village

to village, a dissolute and lawless gang, supporting themselves by fair means or foul, according as they met with kindness or hostility, and passing like a pestilence through the island.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 102. Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 32.

END OF VOL. III.